

# Daniel

## Introduction

### Overview

#### Author:

Daniel

#### Purpose:

- To prepare the king of Babylon Nebuchadnezzar to receive the bad news of chapter 4 by building confidence in the reliability and truthfulness of Daniel's prophecies and the omnipotence of his God in the preceding chapters.
- Reassure the Israelites (captives and first returnees to the Land) that God is in control of history and that His prophet Daniel was telling the truth when he spoke of a prolonged period of oppression before the final phase of God's kingdom.
- To prepare the generations of the distant future for the persecution that will await them in the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.
- To prepare believers in the even more distant future for the coming of the Messiah in the time of the fourth kingdom.

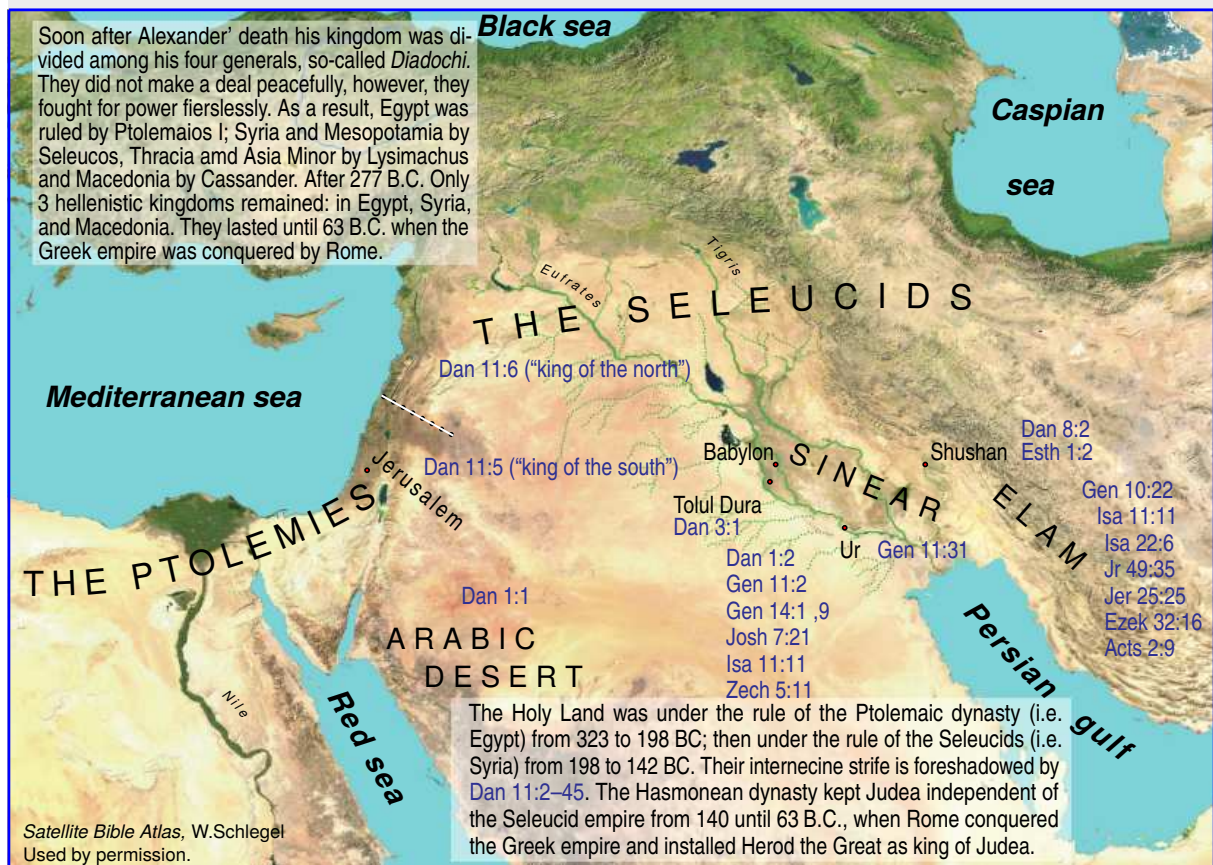
#### Date:

Shortly after 539 B.C.

#### Key truths:

- Daniel and his friends were faithful to God even in exile.
- Daniel can be trusted to tell the truth because he never compromised his faith, even under pressure from his slavers.
- God is the absolute ruler of all history.

### The empires of Daniel's distant visions



- Israel's slavery is prolonged until a total of four kingdoms (of which Babylon is the first) succeed in dominion over her because God's people have not turned away from their sins.
- Although there is much suffering in Israel's future, God's Anointed, Christ, will one day come to bring salvation.

### Author

The authorship of Daniel is a subject of protracted debate among interpreters. Many scholars date the book's composition between 170 and 165 B.C., during the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, long after the lifetime of the prophet Daniel (the so-called Maccabean dating, cf. the article "Who was Darius the Mede?"). This date, however, is contradicted by the book itself, which indicates that Daniel is its principal author (9:2; 10:2) and that it was written shortly after the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus in 539 B.C. Furthermore, Christ himself explicitly links the book to the prophet Daniel (Matt 24:15).

### Time and place of origin

The dispute over the dating of the book of Daniel involves three basic issues:

1. the nature of the prophecy,
2. the alleged historical errors in Daniel, and
3. the linguistic features of the Hebrew and Aramaic in the book.

Generally speaking, Israel's prophets were primarily concerned with religious and social circumstances affecting themselves and their peers. When the prophets predicted the future, it usually concerned near future events. For this reason, some interpreters are of the opinion that Daniel's vision concerning „king of the north“ and „king of the south“ (11:2–12:3) is too detailed to have been written by Daniel, who lived some 200–300 years before the events depicted in the prophecy.

However, this position denies the supernatural nature of the prophecy, as is the case with the occasional practices of other prophets (e.g., 1Kgs 13:2; Isa 44:28). Although the passage Dan 11:2–12:3 is unusual, it is certainly not impossible that Daniel knew such details; after all, it was to him that God revealed secrets as to no one else (cf. e.g. 2:19–23).

Some advocates of late dating argue historical inaccuracies attributed to the book by Daniel. They question Belshazzar's relationship to Nebuchadnezzar (see note 5:2), as well as the identity of Darius the Mede (see note on 6:1).

In addition, they identify the four kingdoms foretold by Daniel (chs. 2; 7) as Babylon, Medea, Persia, and Greece (including the Seleucids and Ptolemies). However, this identification is problematic because there is no historical evidence for an independent Mede kingdom in the interval between the kingdoms of Babylon and Persia. The Persian king Cyrus (550–530 BC) conquered Medea in 549 BC and Babylon in 539 BC (see notes 5:1 and 5:31).

Advocates of the early dating of the book understand the four kingdoms sequence to predict Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. This view is supported by the allusion to the „Medes and Persians“ in 5:28, which shows that the author considered both nations to be parts of one kingdom.

Supporters of the late date argue that several terms borrowed from Greek to refer to musical instruments occur in the text (see note 3:5), as do late Hebrew and Aramaic terms (see note 2:4). None of these arguments, however, is convincing. There is abundant evidence of contact between the Greeks and the peoples of the Near East before the time of Alexander the Great. These are quite sufficient to explain the existence of a minimal number of words taken from Greek before Alexander's conquest.

The original names of musical instruments commonly accompany their bearers without a corresponding equivalent in the local language; compare today's Czech untranslated terminology associated with musical instruments: „gibson“, „jumbo“, „stratocaster“, „telecaster“, „Les Paul“, „stage piano“, „hohner“, „humbucker“, „single-coil“, etc. On the contrary: Proponents of Maccabean dating have trouble explaining the complete absence of terms adopted from Greek, *outside* musical terminology. If the book had been written under Greek rule, commercial, military, political, administrative, etc. terminology would have been rife with Greek terms. But there is nothing of the sort in the book.

The Aramaic and Hebrew of the book of Daniel can be dated anywhere between the late sixth and early second centuries B.C. In other words, the linguistic evidence does not give much weight to either aspect: neither late nor early dating.

The argument for a second-century B.C. date is at odds with the biblical claim regarding the date and authorship of the book of Daniel, and the late dating does not demonstrate the late dating convincingly enough. A date shortly after 539 B.C. (see 1:21) best fits the nature of the prophecy, the historical dates, and the language of the text.

### **Purpose and Distinctiveness**

Daniel contains two different types of material. In the first six chapters there are six historical narratives; in the second half (chapters 7–12) there are four visions, almost exclusively predictive. Among the six narratives of the first half, chapter 2 stands out because it also contains a prediction.

An examination of the content of the historical narratives shows that they are independent wholes, pieced together with a purpose. The narrative offers neither a history of Israel under Babylonian or Persian rule nor a biographical account of Daniel and his friends. It has two main emphases.

On the one hand, the stories show how God's absolute sovereignty extends into the affairs of all nations (2:47; 3:17–18; 4:28–37; 5:18–31 6:25–28). Jerusalem was in ruins, God's people in captivity, and wicked rulers seemed to triumph, but God remains sovereign. According to his unwavering will, he enters among the kingdoms of this world to establish a universal kingdom of which there will never be an end.

Although all nations have believed that deities are territorial, that they have power only over the territory where their people dwell (and because they want to rule the whole world, their people must conquer other territories for themselves and establish their religion there), the experience of the Israelites in captivity shows that their Lord is not limited in any way, not even territorially; He is Lord over the whole earth, including the deities of other nations. And that he does not abandon his people wherever they go. Sometime around that time, the idea began to emerge that since the sacred is not a place on earth where God dwells apart from other places, then time will be sacred. And the holidays on the calendar began to take on importance.

The visions of chapters 7–12 contain predictions of future times during which the truth of the narrative will become more important to God's people. Although the Israelites suffered under the rule of both the Babylonians and the Persians, they did not suffer any widespread and systematic attack on their faith. This did not occur until Antiochus IV Epiphanes, ruler over the Seleucid empire between 175–164 B.C., sought to eradicate the religion of the Jews and force them to conform to Greek religious practices. Many Jews obeyed him, but others resisted and suffered adversity. One of the main reasons for writing the book of Daniel is to prepare God's people for the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes and to encourage perseverance in those who would live through the coming times of persecution.

The book also looks beyond the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes to the coming of Christ who will one day destroy all human empires and establish His eternal kingdom of righteousness and peace. All of these events are in view in the prophecies of Daniel. The book has served as a powerful encouragement to God's people suffering oppression and continues to be an inspiration to persecuted believers today.

### **Christ in Daniel**

Daniel's focus on the restoration of Israel after the exile turns the attention to Jesus quite directly. Like some other prophets, Daniel predicted a glorious future for God's people, the fulfillment of which the New Testament is linked to the first and second coming of Christ, as well as to the whole history of the Church.

While much controversy surrounds the details of the fulfillment of Daniel's visions, the basic structure of Daniel's visions leaves no one in doubt that Christ is the fulfillment of the prophet's hopes. This is most clearly seen in the way Jesus refers to Himself as the „Son of Man“ (e.g., [Matt 9:6](#); [10:23](#); [12:8](#)). Daniel used the term in the sense of God's exalted Davidic king, representing God on earth. Jesus, the Messiah, is the ultimate Davidic King; only he fulfills the predictions of the Son of Man in Daniel's visions (see [notes on 7:13](#) and [7:14](#); see the theological article [Kingdom of God Mt 4](#)).

*One never does evil so fully and gaily, as when one does it through a false principle of conscience.*

*Blaise Pascal*

In addition, Daniel learned in chapter 9 that Jeremiah's prediction of 70 years of exile would be extended to „seventy weeks“ years (9:24), or about 490 years. This prediction reaches its initial fulfillment at Christ's first coming. The delay corresponds to the series of four foreign empires that will oppress God's people (2:1–49) and to the rock that became „a great mountain that filled the whole earth“ (2:35), which Daniel refers to as „a kingdom that will not be destroyed“ (2:44). This is the kingdom of Christ, which was inaugurated by His first coming, continues and grows to this day, and will reach its consummation at Christ's glorious return (see the theological articles [The Kingdom of God Mt 4](#) and [The Plan of the Ages Heb 7](#).)

Daniel foresaw other, even more concrete events that have come to the fore again in the New Testament. For example, Jesus refers to Daniel's prediction of „exact abomination“ (see [note on 9:27; 11:31; 12:11](#)), which originally pointed to the desecration of the temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes of Greece (see Introduction: Intent and Peculiarities) as a foreshadowing of the destruction of the temple by the Roman general Titus in 70 CE (see [notes on Mt 24:15](#) and [Mk 13:14](#)).

Most Christians associate this typology with Antichrist, whose spirit is already at work in the world (see [notes on 1Jn 2:18](#)) and will appear in fullness, apparently as a specific person, near Christ's return (see [notes on 2Te 2:3](#)).

### Outline

#### I. Narration (1:1–6:28)

- A. The loyalty of Daniel and his friends (1:1–21)
- B. (2:1–49)
- C. Deliverance from the fiery furnace (3:1–30)
- D. Nebuchadnezzar's second dream (4:1–37)
- E. The Judgment of Balsazar (5:1–31)
- F. Deliverance from the lion's den (6:1–28)

*The stories of Daniel and his friends illustrate both their loyalty to God and his supremacy over all nations.*

#### II. Vision (7:1–12:13)

- A. Vision of the Four beasts (7:1–28)
- B. The vision of the ram and the goat (8:1–27).
- C. Vision of the seventy weeks (9:1–27)
- D. Vision of the future of God's people (10:1–12:13)
  - 1. The angel's message to Daniel (10:1–11:1)
  - 2. From Daniel to Antiochus IV Epiphanes (11:21–12:3)
  - 3. Final message to Daniel (12:4–13)

*Daniel's visions of the future of God's people, looking back to the long after the end of the exile. God revealed to Daniel that the four great kingdoms would dominate and persecute Israel. At the time of the fourth of these, God will set up His kingdom, of which there will be no end.*

# 1

**In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim** king of Judah came Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Jerusalem, and besieged it. <sup>2</sup> **And the Lord gave** Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with part of the vessels of the

**1:1–21** *Vindication of Daniel and His Friends.* The prophet set the context of his book by narrating his (and his companions') personal history of captivity, training, faithfulness and service to King Nebuchadnezzar. **1:1–6:28** *The Narratives.* This first section of the book highlights both God's absolute control over the kingdoms of this world and the sincere devotion that Daniel and his friends offered to God. Daniel wanted his readers to learn that although God's people are sometimes persecuted, kings and kingdoms rise and fall according to God's purpose. Daniel also taught that God would greatly bless those who paid attention to him as God's faithful spokesman. This material divides into six separate narratives: the vindication of Daniel and his friends (1:1–21), Neb-

uchadnezzar's dream (2:1–49), deliverance from the furnace (3:1–30), Nebuchadnezzar's second dream (4:1–37), judgment on Belshazzar (5:1–31) and Daniel's deliverance from the den of lions (6:1–28).

**1:1** **In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim.** In 605 B.C., the same year Nebuchadnezzar defeated an Assyrian-Egyptian coalition at Carchemish and initiated Babylon's rise to international power. Subsequent to victory at Carchemish Nebuchadnezzar advanced against Jehoiakim (2Ki 24:1–2; 2Ch 36:5–7) and took Daniel and a number of other Judahites captive. This was the first of three invasions of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar. The second was in 597 B.C. (2Ki 24:10–14) and

*You can't get second things by putting them first. You get second things only by putting first things first.*

C. S. Lewis

house of God: **which he carried** into the land of Shinar to the house of his god; and he brought the vessels into **the treasure-house of his god**.<sup>3</sup> And the king spoke to Ashpenaz the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring *certain* of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes;<sup>4</sup> Children in whom *was* no blemish, but of good appearance, and skillful in all wisdom, and intelligent in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as *had* ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach **the learning and the language of the Chaldeans**.<sup>5</sup> And the king appointed them a **daily provision of the king's food**, and of the wine which he drank: so nourishing them three years, that at the end of them they might stand before the king.<sup>6</sup> Now among these were of the children of Judah, **Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah**:<sup>7</sup> To whom the prince of the eunuchs gave names: for he gave to Daniel *the name* of **Beltshazzar**; and to Hananiah, of Shadrach; and to Mishael, of Meshach; and to Azariah, of Abed-nego.

<sup>8</sup> But Daniel purposed in his heart that **he would not defile himself** with the portion of the king's food, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself.<sup>9</sup> Now God had brought Daniel into favor and tender love with the prince of the eunuchs.<sup>10</sup> And the prince of the eunuchs said to Daniel, I fear my lord the king, who hath appointed your provision and your drink: for why should he see your faces more meager than the children who *are* of your sort? then will ye make *me* endanger my head to the king.<sup>11</sup> Then said Daniel to Melzar, whom the prince of the eunuchs had set over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah,<sup>12</sup> Prove thy servants, I beseech thee, ten days; and let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink.<sup>13</sup> Then let our countenances be looked upon before thee, and the countenances of the children that eat of the portion of the king's provision: and as thou seest, deal with thy servants.<sup>14</sup> So he consented to them in this matter, and proved them ten days.<sup>15</sup> And at the end of ten days **their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh** than all the children who ate the portion of the king's provision.<sup>16</sup> Thus Melzar took away the portion of their food, and the wine that they should drink, and gave them pulse.<sup>17</sup> As for these four children, **God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom**: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.<sup>18</sup> Now **at the end of the days that the king had said** he should bring them in, then the prince of the eunuchs brought them in before Nebuchadnezzar.<sup>19</sup>

the third in 587 B.C. (2Ki 25:1–24). The apparent discrepancy between Dan 1:1 and Jer 25:1 and 46:2 (where Jeremiah placed Nebuchadnezzar's attack against Jehoiakim during Jehoiakim's fourth rather than third year) may be explained by the difference between the Babylonian and Jewish systems of chronology. Under the Babylonian system, which Daniel apparently used, the first year of a king's reign was viewed as an "accession year," and the reign itself was counted as beginning on the first of the month of Nisan in the following year. Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar led the Babylonians to victory at Carchemish in 605 B.C. as crown prince and commander of the army. Shortly after this victory he assumed the Babylonian throne upon the death of his father, Nabopolassar (626-605 B.C.). Nebuchadnezzar's reign (605-562 B.C.) forms the historical background for much in the books of Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel.

**1:2 And the Lord gave.** Israel's defeat by the Babylonians is not to be explained simply by analysis of the military and political conditions of the time. God was sovereignly at work in the affairs of the nations. He used the Babylonians to judge his own people' breaking their covenant obligations (2Ki 17:15, 18–20; 21:12–15 24:3–4).

**Which he carried.** Refers to the plunder of vessels from the temple, not to the deportation of captives.

**The treasure-house of his god.** Marduk was the chief god of the Babylonian pantheon (cf. Jer 50:2).

**1:4 The learning and the language of the Chaldeans.** Babylonian literature was written in cuneiform and primarily on clay tablets. Thousands of these tablets have been discovered. Study of this literature would have introduced Daniel and his friends to the polytheistic worldview of the Babylonians, which prominently featured magic, sorcery and astrology.

**1:5 Daily provision of the king's food.** Jehoiachin later received the same provision under the rule of the Babylonian king Evil-Merodach (2Ki 25:27–30).

**1:6 Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah.** Characteristic Hebrew

names. Two of them contain the Hebrew component el, meaning "God," and two the component yah, a shortened form of "Yahweh" ("the LORD"). Daniel means "My judge is God," Hananiah "Yahweh is gracious," Mishael "Who is what God is?" and Azariah "Yahweh has helped."

**1:7 Beltshazzar ... Shadrach ... Meshach ... Abednego.** The meanings of these names are disputed. Suggestions for Beltshazzar: "Bel [another name for Marduk, the chief Babylonian god] protect his life" or "Lady, protect the king." Shadrach: "I am very fearful (of God)" or "The command of Aku [the Sumerian moon god]." Meshach: "I am of little account" or "Who is what Aku is?" Abednego: "Servant of the shining one."

**1:8 He would not defile himself.** The reason for Daniel's conclusion that the king's food would defile him and his friends is not given. Perhaps eating it involved violation of the dietary laws of the Mosaic legislation (Lev 11:1–47), which prohibited eating pork or meat from which blood had not been drained (Lev 17:10–14). It may also have involved partaking of food that had been offered to Babylonian idols.

**1:15 Their countenances appeared fairer and fatter in flesh.** God blessed Daniel and his friends for their obedience to the Lord and their refusal to compromise their faith in a heathen environment (Deut 8:3; Matt 4:4).

**1:17 God gave them knowledge and skill in all learning and wisdom.** God's blessing was not limited to physical well-being but included outstanding success in intellectual development during their three years of Babylonian education. visions and dreams of all kinds. With a view to what follows in the book (chs. 2; 4–5) Daniel was distinguished from his companions by his ability to interpret dreams and visions, much as Joseph had been set apart by the same in the court of Pharaoh (Ge 40:8; 41:16).

**1:18 At the end of the days that the king had said.** After the three years mentioned in verse 5.

And the king communed with them; and among them all was found none like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah: therefore they stood before the king. <sup>20</sup> And in all matters of wisdom *and* understanding, that the king inquired of them, he found them ten times superior to all the **magicians** *and* astrologers that *were* in all his realm. <sup>21</sup> And Daniel continued *even to the first year of king Cyrus*.

**2** And *in the second year* of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuchadnezzar dreamed dreams, with which **his spirit was troubled, and his sleep broke from him**. <sup>2</sup> Then the king commanded to call **the magicians, and the astrologers**, and the **sorcerers**, and the **Chaldeans**, to show the king his dream. So they came and stood before

**1:20 Magicians and astrologers.** The term here translated “magician” is also used in [Ge 41:8](#) and [24](#) and [Ex 7:11](#). The term translated “enchanters” occurs only here and in [2:2](#) and is sometimes rendered “conjurer” or “soothsayer.” Daniel and his friends demonstrated superior insight on the matters about which they were questioned.

**1:21 To the first year of king Cyrus.** Babylon fell to Cyrus in 539 B.C., 66 years after Daniel had been taken captive to Babylon. Daniel lived through the entire period of the Babylonian captivity. Cyrus issued a decree in the first year of his reign that permitted the Israelites to return from captivity and to take with them the vessels from the temple that had been seized by Nebuchadnezzar ([Ezr 1:7–11](#)). The statement does not signify that Daniel died in the first year of Cyrus's reign ([10:1](#)).

**2:1–49 Nebuchadnezzar's First Dream.** While in the service of Nebuchadnezzar Daniel interpreted the king's dream, revealing that Daniel was greatly blessed by God and that God was moving history toward the establishment of his kingdom.

**2:1 In the second year.** There is no contradiction between this state-

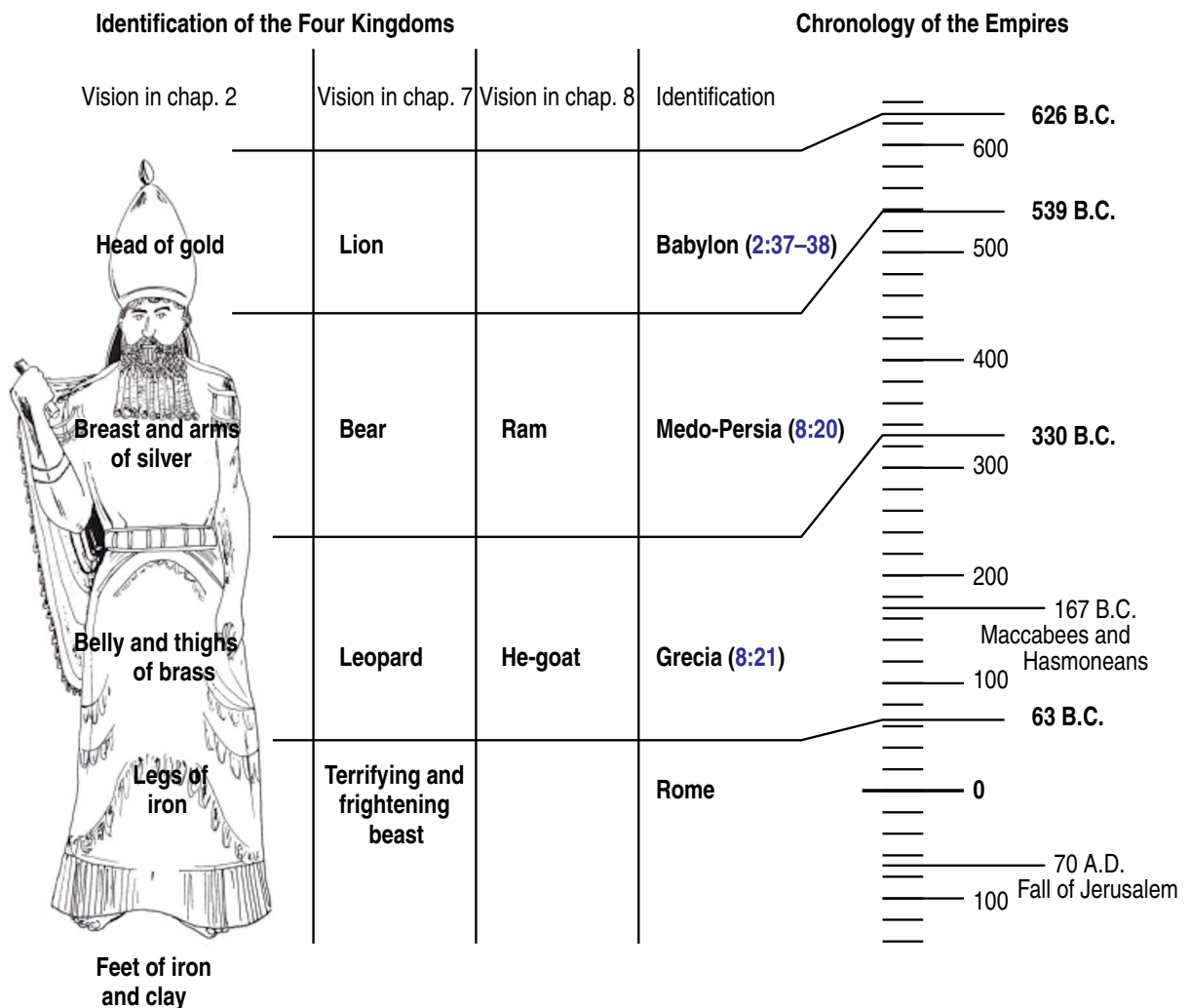
ment and the completion of the three-year period of training for Daniel and his friends mentioned in [1:5](#) and [18–20](#) if one understands that the first year of training was considered Nebuchadnezzar's “accession year,” while the second and third years would correspond with the “first” and “second” years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. It was during Nebuchadnezzar's second year, according to the Babylonian system of accession-year dating, that the dream occurred (see [note on 1:1](#)).

**His spirit was troubled, and his sleep broke from him.** It was widely believed in the ancient Near East that the gods spoke to human beings in dreams. Nebuchadnezzar's agitation is understandable because the dream had implications for the future of his kingdom. When a dream could not be remembered, it was believed to be a sign that the deity was angry with the person involved.

**2:2 The magicians, and the astrologers.** See [note on 1:20](#).

**Sorcerers.** Practitioners of divination through means such as witchcraft. Their activities were prohibited by God ([Ex 22:18](#); [Dt 18:10](#); [Isa 47:9, 12](#); [Jer 27:9](#)).

Daniel's Visions of the Four Kingdoms



the king.<sup>3</sup> And the king said to them, I have dreamed a dream, and my spirit was troubled to know the dream.<sup>4</sup> Then the Chaldeans spoke to the king in **Syriac**, O king, live for ever: tell thy servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation.<sup>5</sup> The king answered and said to the Chaldeans, The thing is gone from me: **if ye will not make known to me the dream, with the interpretation of it**, ye shall be cut in pieces, and your houses shall be made a dunghill.<sup>6</sup> But if ye shall show the dream, and the interpretation of it, ye shall receive of me gifts and rewards and great honor: therefore show me the dream, and the interpretation of it.<sup>7</sup> They answered again and said, Let the king tell his servants the dream, and we will show the interpretation of it.<sup>8</sup> The king answered and said, I know of certainty that ye would gain the time, because ye see the thing is gone from me.<sup>9</sup> But if ye will not make known to me the dream, *there is but* one decree for you: for ye have prepared lying and corrupt words to speak before me, till the time be changed: therefore tell me the dream, and I shall know that ye can show me the interpretation of it.<sup>10</sup> The Chaldeans answered before the king, and said, There is not a man upon the earth that can show the king's matter: therefore *there is* no king, lord, nor ruler, *that* hath asked such things of any magician, or astrologer, or Chaldean.<sup>11</sup> And *it is* a rare thing that the king requireth, and **there is no other that can show it before the king, except the gods**, whose dwelling is not with flesh.<sup>12</sup> For this cause the king was angry and very furious, and commanded to destroy all the wise *men* of Babylon.<sup>13</sup> And the decree went forth that the wise *men* should be slain; and they sought Daniel and his fellows to be slain.<sup>14</sup> Then Daniel answered with counsel and wisdom to Arioch the captain of the king's guard, who had gone forth to slay the wise *men* of Babylon:<sup>15</sup> He answered and said to Arioch the king's captain, Why *is* the decree *so* hasty from the king? Then Arioch made the thing known to Daniel.<sup>16</sup> Then Daniel went in, and desired of the king that he would give him time, and that he would show the king the interpretation.<sup>17</sup> Then Daniel went to his house, and made the thing known to Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah, his companions:<sup>18</sup> That they would desire **mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret**; that Daniel and his companions should not perish with the rest of the wise *men* of Babylon.<sup>19</sup> Then was the **secret** revealed to Daniel in a night vision. Then Daniel blessed the God of heaven.<sup>20</sup> Daniel answered and said, Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are his:<sup>21</sup> And he changeth the times and the seasons; **he removeth kings, and setteth up kings**; he giveth wisdom to the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding:<sup>22</sup> **He revealeth the deep and secret things**: he knoweth what *is* in the darkness, and the light dwelleth with him.<sup>23</sup> **I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers**, who hast given me wisdom and might, and hast made known to me now what we desired of thee: for thou hast *now* made known to us the king's matter.<sup>24</sup> Therefore Daniel went into Arioch, whom the king had ordained to destroy the wise *men* of Babylon: he went and said thus to him; Destroy not the wise *men* of Babylon: bring me in before the king, and **I will show to the king the interpretation**.<sup>25</sup> Then Arioch brought in Daniel before the king in haste, and said thus to him, I have found a man of the captives of Judah, that will make known to the king the interpretation.<sup>26</sup> The king answered and said to Daniel, whose name *was* Belteshazzar, Art thou able to make known to me the dream which I have seen, and the interpretation of it?<sup>27</sup> Daniel answered in the presence of the king, and said, The secret which the king hath demanded, the wise *men*, the astrologers, the magicians, the sooth-sayers, cannot show to the king;<sup>28</sup> But **there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets**, and maketh known to the

**Chaldeans.** This term translates the Hebrew term for Chaldeans; it is probably used here as a designation for a class of soothsayers concerned with astrology rather than as a designation for an ethnic group. See 1:4; 3:8; 5:30; 9:1 and NIV text notes.

**2:4 Syriac.** From here until the end of chapter 7 the text is written in Aramaic rather than in Hebrew (*Ezr 4:8–6:18* was also written in Aramaic). It is not clear why the two languages were used, but Aramaic may have been used for the sections containing prophecies that would have been of more interest to non-Jews.

**2:5 If ye will not make known to me the dream, with the interpretation of it.** Nebuchadnezzar formulated a plan for testing his advisors. If they could not relate the dream back to him he would have no confidence in their interpretation (see *v. 9*).

**2:11 There is no other that can show it before the king, except the gods.** The wise men were forced to confess that they were unable to do what the king asked. They claimed that only the gods have such power and that they do not reveal such things to men. See *Exod 8:18–19*.

**2:18 Mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret.** Daniel also realized that human wisdom was insufficient to meet the king's demand (see *note on 2:11*). Daniel addressed God as the ruler of the stars to which the heathen astrologers looked for guidance.

**2:19 Secret.** Here the word denotes an enigma that can be interpreted only by God's revelation. The term was later used by Daniel as a

reference to God's hidden purpose at work in history (*4:9*).

**2:21 He removeth kings, and setteth up kings.** Daniel alluded to the content of the dream. See *BC 36*.

**2:22 He revealeth the deep and secret things.** See *note on 2:11*.

**2:23 I thank thee, and praise thee, O thou God of my fathers.** Daniel was deeply grateful for God's mercy in responding to his prayer. The divine revelation he received was in stark contrast to the silence of the false deities of the heathen soothsayers. Only God knows all things and is sovereign over all creation. God chose to exalt Daniel by imparting to him special knowledge.

**2:24 I will show to the king the interpretation.** Daniel spoke here only of the interpretation of the dream. The text assumes that he already knew the content.

**2:28 There is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets.** As Joseph had done in Egypt (*Ge 10:8; 41:16*), Daniel attributed his knowledge of the dream and its interpretation to divine revelation. God showed himself superior in his ability to reveal secrets and mysteries, in days to come. Literally, "in the after part of the days." This expression can mean "in the end times" or "in the last days," which is the time of restoration after the exile (see *Dt 4:30*). The phrase may also simply refer to the general future (*Ge 49:1; Dt 4:30; 31:29*). The Septuagint (the Greek translation of the OT) interprets it here as "in the last days,"

king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these; <sup>29</sup> As for thee, O king, thy thoughts came *into thy mind* upon thy bed, what should come to pass hereafter: and he that revealeth secrets maketh known to thee what shall come to pass. <sup>30</sup> But as for me, this secret is not revealed to me for *any* wisdom that I have more than any living, but for *their* sakes that shall make known the interpretation to the king, and that thou mayest know the thoughts of thy heart. <sup>31</sup> Thou, O king, sawest, and behold a great image. This great image, whose brightness *was* excellent, stood before thee; and its form *was* terrible. <sup>32</sup> The **head** of this image *was* of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, <sup>33</sup> His legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay. <sup>34</sup> Thou sawest till a **stone** was cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet *that were* of iron and clay, and broke them to pieces. <sup>35</sup> Then was the iron, the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, broken to pieces together, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing-floors; and the wind carried them away, that no place was found for them: and the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth. <sup>36</sup> This *is* the dream; and we will tell the interpretation of it before the king. <sup>37</sup> Thou, O king, *art* a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. <sup>38</sup> And wherever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thy hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou *art* **this head of gold**. <sup>39</sup> And after thee shall arise another kingdom inferior to thee, and another third kingdom of brass, which shall bear rule over all the earth. <sup>40</sup> And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all *things*: and as iron that breaketh all these, shall it break in pieces and bruise. <sup>41</sup> And whereas thou sawest the feet and toes, part of potter's clay, and part of iron, the kingdom shall be divided; but there shall be in it of the strength of the iron, forasmuch as thou sawest the iron mixed with the miry clay. <sup>42</sup> And *as* the toes of the feet *were* part of iron, and part of clay, *so* the kingdom shall be partly strong, and partly broken. <sup>43</sup> And whereas thou sawest iron mixed with miry clay, they shall mingle themselves with the seed of men: but **they shall not cleave one to another**, even as iron is not mixed with clay. <sup>44</sup> And **in the days of these kings** shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. <sup>45</sup> Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain, without hands, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the brass, the clay, the silver, and the gold; the great God hath made known to the king what shall come to pass hereafter: and the dream *is* certain, and the interpretation of it sure. <sup>46</sup> **Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face**, and worshiped Daniel, and commanded that they should offer an oblation and sweet odors to him. <sup>47</sup> The king answered to Daniel, and said, Of a truth *it is*, that your God *is* a **God of gods, and a Lord of kings**, and a revealer of secrets, seeing thou couldst reveal this secret. <sup>48</sup> Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him **ruler over the whole province of Babylon**, and chief of the governors

although it is difficult to determine Daniel's intended usage. The Greek expression is used five times in the New Testament, two with reference to the age begun at Pentecost ([Ac 2:17](#); [Heb 1:2](#)) and three with regard to the end of the age preceding the second advent of Christ ([2Ti 3:1](#); [Jas 5:3](#); [2Pe 3:3](#)).

**2:32–33 Head ... gold, ... breast and arms ... silver, ... belly and thighs... brass, legs ... iron, ... feet part of iron and part of clay.** Moving from the head to the feet of the image, there is a decrease in both the value and weight of the materials but a general increase in its strength. The image was clearly too heavy with fragile feet.

**2:34 Stone ...without hands.** Unlike the kingdoms represented by the statue, this rock would be formed by God himself. In the Old Testament a rock is often associated with kingship; here it is linked to the kingdom itself (see [1Co 10:4](#) and its [note](#)). It is likely that Daniel had in mind the Messiah, the great son of David, who would establish God's kingdom over all of the earth—including the Gentile nations (*v.* 35)—after the restoration from exile. See theological article "The Kingdom of God" at [Matthew 4](#). It struck the statue on its feet of iron and clay. Some interpreters view the mixture of iron and clay in the feet of the image as representing a second phase of the fourth kingdom—as distinguished from the legs, which were made of solid iron (*cf.* *vv.* 41–43).

**2:38–40 Thou art this head of gold ... another kingdom ... third kingdom ... fourth kingdom.** The four kingdoms represent the Babylonian, Medo-Persian, Greek and Roman Empires. The climax of the dream occurs in the time of the fourth kingdom (see "Introduction" and chart "Visions in Daniel," at Daniel 2).

**2:43 They shall not cleave one to another.** The fourth kingdom would constitute a composite of peoples who would not adhere together

well. Efforts to combine the diverse elements of the kingdom would not succeed.

**2:44 In the days of these kings.** Some interpreters surmise that "those kings" refers to the succeeding kings of the fourth kingdom. It seems best, however, to understand them as referring to the succession of the rulers of the four kingdoms previously mentioned in this chapter. The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed. Like other prophets Daniel spoke of the kingdom of God that would be established after the exile as permanent (e.g., [Isa 9:7](#); [Joel 2:26–27](#); [Am 9:15](#)). The New Testament explains that the kingdom began with the first coming of Jesus and will reach its consummation at Christ's glorious return. See theological article "The Kingdom of God" at [Matthew 4](#).

**2:46 Then the king Nebuchadnezzar fell upon his face.** In a remarkable reversal of roles Daniel was exalted to a position of great honor by virtue of the Lord's intervention on his behalf. Nebuchadnezzar's reaction anticipated the coming kingdom of God.

**2:47 Your God is a God of gods.** Nebuchadnezzar's statement does not signify that he recognized Israel's God as the only true God, but he did perceive him to be superior to the deities of the Babylonian pantheon.

**And a Lord of kings.** Nebuchadnezzar declared that Israel's God was supreme also over human rulers and their kingdoms. This is a unifying theme of Daniel [1:1–6:28](#).

**2:48 Ruler over the whole province of Babylon.** The Babylonian Empire was divided into provinces. Daniel was appointed the ruler (*cf.* [3:2](#)) of the province in which the capital city was located. For ac-



over all the wise *men* of Babylon. <sup>49</sup> Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon: but Daniel *sat* in the gate of the king.

Nebuchadnezzar the king made **an image of gold**, whose **hight** was sixty cubits, *and* the breadth of it six cubits: he set it up in **the plain of Dura**, in the province of Babylon. <sup>2</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to convene **the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sherifs**, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. <sup>3</sup> Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sherifs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were assembled to the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. <sup>4</sup> Then a herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, <sup>5</sup> *That* at what time ye hear the sound of the **cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer**, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up. <sup>6</sup> And whoever shall not fall down and worship shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a **burning fiery furnace**. <sup>7</sup> Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of music, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down *and* worshiped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. <sup>8</sup> Wherefore at that time certain **Chaldeans** came near, and accused the Jews. <sup>9</sup> They spoke and said to the king Nebuchadnezzar, O king, live for ever. <sup>10</sup> Thou, O king, hast made a decree, that every man that shall hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image: <sup>11</sup> And whoever shall not fall down and worship, *that* he shall be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. <sup>12</sup> There are certain Jews whom thou hast set over the affairs of the province of Babylon, **Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego**; these men, O king, have not regarded thee: they serve not thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. <sup>13</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar in *his* rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. Then they brought these men before the king. <sup>14</sup> Nebuchadnezzar spoke and said to them, *Is it true*, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, do ye not serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? <sup>15</sup> Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of music, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; *well*: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and **who is that God** that shall deliver you out of my hands? <sup>16</sup> Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we *are* not careful to answer thee in this matter. <sup>17</sup> If it is *so*, **our God whom we serve is able** to deliver us from the burning fiery

3

counts of similar ascents to political power by Jews in foreign lands, see *Ge* 41:37–44 (Joseph) and *Est* 8:1–2 (Mordecai). Daniel's friends were similarly exalted as his assistants (*v.* 49). The divine approval of Daniel is another dominant theme in this portion of the book. Although prominent in Babylon, he never compromised his faith: he was a reliable prophet of God.

**3:1–30 Deliverance From the Furnace.** Daniel recounted God's miraculous deliverance of his friends from the fiery furnace to instruct his readers that God's people must admire Daniel's companions and be faithful to God alone. He also illustrated that God would eventually frustrate even the mightiest kings who tempt his people to abandon their God to worship another.

**3:1 An image.** Opinions differ as to whether this extraordinary image was of Nebuchadnezzar himself or of a Babylonian deity or whether it was merely an obelisk. From what is known of Babylonian religious tradition, it seems likely that the image was either of Bel or of Nabu, Nebuchadnezzar's patron deity. Prostration before the image of this deity would also indicate submission to Nebuchadnezzar, the deity's representative (*cf.* 2:46).

**Of gold.** Probably gold overlay, the fabrication of the image being much like that described in *Isa* 40:19, 41:7 and *Jer* 10:3–9.

**Hight was sixty cubits, and the breadth of it six cubits.** The proportions are the reason some have concluded that the image was an obelisk rather than a human form (the proportions of the human body are six to one). However, the image may have stood on a pedestal or had a stylized shape.

**The plain of Dura.** Its location is uncertain. It is usually associated with Tolul Dura, located about six miles south of Babylon.

**3:2 The princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counselors, the sherifs.** The precise responsibilities

of these seven different types of officials are not known. Five of the seven terms seem to be of Persian origin, perhaps indicating that Daniel did not complete the writing of this account until after the beginning of Persian rule in 539 B.C.

**3:4–6** See WLC 130.

**3:5 Cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer.** Three of the six terms used for different types of musical instruments account for the only Greek loanwords ("zither," "harp" and "pipes") in Daniel. This is not surprising, since the exchange of musicians and their instruments at royal courts has a long history. The presence of these Greek terms does not therefore constitute compelling evidence that this account was written after the conquests of Alexander the Great.

**3:6 Burning fiery furnace.** Furnaces, or kilns, were widely used in Babylon for the firing of bricks (*Ge* 11:3). It was not unusual to use such furnaces for execution by burning (*Jer* 29:22; see Herodotus. 1.86; 4.69; see also 2 Maccabees 7).

**3:8 Chaldeans.** See NIV text note and *note on* 2:2. The term "Chaldeans" as used here is best understood as indicating nationality rather than function. The informants looked down on the Jews simply because they were Jews (*v.* 12; *Est* 3:5. The privileged position of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego (2:49) heightened the Chaldeans' hostility toward them (*v.* 12).

**3:12 Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego.** See *note on* 1:7. Daniel was either not present or exempted from demonstrating his loyalty because of his high position (2:48).

**3:15 Who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?** From Nebuchadnezzar's polytheistic, heathen perspective there was no god capable of such deliverance. Unwittingly Nebuchadnezzar challenged the power of the God of Israel.

**3:17–18 Our God whom we serve is able ... we will not serve thy**

” *Courage is not simply one of the virtues but the form of every virtue at the testing point, which means at the point of highest reality.*

*C.S.Lewis*

furnace, and he will deliver *us* out of thy hand, O king. <sup>18</sup> But if not, be it known to thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. <sup>19</sup> Then was Nebuchadnezzar full of fury, and the form of his visage was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego: *therefore* he spoke, and commanded that they should heat the furnace seven times more than it was wont to be heated. <sup>20</sup> And he commanded the most mighty men that *were* in his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, *and* to cast *them* into the burning fiery furnace. <sup>21</sup> Then these men were bound in their coats, their hose, and their hats, and their *other* garments, and were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. <sup>22</sup> Therefore because the king's commandment was urgent, and the furnace exceeding hot, the flame of the fire killed those men that took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. <sup>23</sup> And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace. <sup>24</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, *and* spoke, and said to his counselors, Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said to the king, True, O king. <sup>25</sup> He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt: and the form of the fourth is like the **son of God**. <sup>26</sup> Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace, *and* spoke, and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, ye servants of **the most high God**, come forth, and come *hither*. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, came forth from the midst of the fire. <sup>27</sup> And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counselors, being assembled, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was a hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor had the smell of fire passed upon them. <sup>28</sup> *Then* Nebuchadnezzar spoke, and said, Blessed *be* the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, who hath sent his **angel**, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. <sup>29</sup> Therefore I make a decree, that every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is **no other god** that can deliver after this sort.

<sup>30</sup> Then **the king promoted** Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in the province of Babylon.

**4** **Nebuchadnezzar the king**, to all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied to you. <sup>2</sup> I thought it good to show the signs and wonders that **the high God** hath wrought towards me. <sup>3</sup> **How great** are his signs! and how mighty *are* his wonders! his kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion *is* from generation to generation. <sup>4</sup> I Nebuchadnezzar was at rest in my house, and flourishing in my palace: <sup>5</sup> I saw a dream which made me afraid, and the thoughts upon my bed and the visions of my head troubled me. <sup>6</sup> Therefore I made a decree to bring in all the wise *men* of Babylon before me, that they might make known to me the interpretation of the dream. <sup>7</sup> Then came in the magicians, the astrologers, the

**gods**. The men did not assert that God always protects his people from physical harm (Isa 43:1–2). Although he may opt to do so, and certainly is able, the central idea is that God's people should remain obedient to their Lord no matter what the circumstances because he is far more trustworthy than any human ruler and more powerful than any force on Earth. Thus the first six chapters of Daniel exalt the prophet and his friends as men who were unflinchingly faithful to God throughout their ordeals. See WLC 109.

**3:25 Son of God**. In the ancient world the expression “son of the gods” could refer to various types of heavenly beings. Here it meant “angel” (v. 28). No explanation is given for why Nebuchadnezzar recognized the fourth person in the furnace as a heavenly being (see [note on v. 28](#)). Perhaps the miraculous presence of the fourth person was in itself sufficient reason for this conclusion.

**3:26 The most high God**. A title for God's universal authority. As in verse 29 (“no other god can save in this way”) and in 2:47, this confession on the lips of a pagan was not an acknowledgment that Daniel's Lord alone was God but rather that Daniel's God was supreme above other deities (4:2, 17, 34). On the lips of an Israelite the same confession implied monotheism (4:24–32; 5:18, 21; 7:18–27).

**3:27** See WCF 5.3.

**3:28 Angel**. The angel may be identified with “the angel of the LORD,”

who may have represented an appearance of Christ prior to his incarnation (cf. 6:22; see notes on [Ge 16:7](#) and [Ex 3:2](#)). God promised his presence when Israel walked through fire (Isa 43:1–3).

**3:29 No other god**. See [note on verse 26](#). See also WCF 20.4.

**3:30 The king promoted**. As this narrative makes clear, their prominence resulted from their faithfulness to God, not from compromise with the Babylonians.

**4:1–37 Nebuchadnezzar's Second Dream**. The prophet narrated the story of the king's second dream and its interpretation. Once again Daniel was exalted and Nebuchadnezzar humbled before God.

**4:1 Nebuchadnezzar the king**. This is the book's final incident associated with Nebuchadnezzar. It too is placed late in the king's 43-year reign, at a time when his building projects were completed and his power was at its height (cf. vv. 4, 30). At that time Nebuchadnezzar ruled over the most powerful kingdom on Earth, but he was no match for the God of Israel.

**4:2 The high God**. See [notes on 2:47](#) and [3:26](#) and [28](#).

**4:3 How great**. Nebuchadnezzar's confession in this verse and in [verses 34–35](#) communicates one of the central themes of the book of Daniel; namely, the absolute sovereignty of the God of Israel over the kingdoms of the earth and their rulers.

**4:6–7** See [notes on 1:20](#) and [2:2](#).

Chaldeans, and the sooth-sayers: and I told the dream before them; but they did not make known to me the interpretation of it.<sup>8</sup> But at the last Daniel came in before me, whose name *is* **Belteshazzar**, according to the name of my God, and in whom *is* the spirit of the holy gods: and before him I told the dream, *saying*,<sup>9</sup> O Belteshazzar, master of the magicians, because I know that the **spirit of the holy gods** *is* in thee, and no secret troubleth thee, tell me the visions of my dream that I have seen, and the interpretation of it.<sup>10</sup> Thus *were* the visions of my head in my bed; I saw, and **behold a tree** in the midst of the earth, and its hight *was* great.<sup>11</sup> The tree grew, and was strong, and its hight **reached to heaven**, and the sight of it to the end of all the earth:<sup>12</sup> Its leaves *were* fair, and its fruit abundant, and in it *was* food for all: the beasts of the field had shade under it, and the fowls of heaven dwelt among its boughs, and all flesh was fed from it.<sup>13</sup> I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and behold, a **watcher** and a holy one came down from heaven;<sup>14</sup> He cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off its branches, shake off its leaves, and scatter its fruit: let the beasts escape from under it, and the fowls from its branches.<sup>15</sup> Nevertheless leave the stump of its roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and **let it be** wet with the dew of heaven, and *let* its portion *be* with the beasts in the grass of the earth.<sup>16</sup> Let his heart be changed from man's, and **let a beast's heart be given to him**; and let **seven times** pass over him.<sup>17</sup> This matter *is* by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men.<sup>18</sup> This dream I king Nebuchadnezzar have seen. Now thou, O Belteshazzar, declare the interpretation of it, forasmuch as all the wise *men* of my kingdom are not able to make known to me the interpretation: but thou *art* able; for the spirit of the holy gods *is* in thee.<sup>19</sup> Then Daniel, whose name *was* Belteshazzar, was astonished for one hour, and his thoughts troubled him. The king spoke, and said, Belteshazzar, let not the dream, or the interpretation of it, trouble thee. Belteshazzar answered, and said, My lord, the dream *be* to them that hate thee, and the interpretation of it to thy enemies.<sup>20</sup> The tree that thou sawest, which grew, and was strong, whose hight reached to the heaven, and the sight of it to all the earth;<sup>21</sup> Whose leaves *were* fair, and the fruit of it abundant, and in it *was* food for all; under which the beasts of the field dwelt, and upon whose branches the fowls of heaven had their habitation:<sup>22</sup> It *is* **thou, O king**, that art grown and become strong: for thy greatness is grown, and reacheth to heaven, and thy dominion to the end of the earth.<sup>23</sup> And whereas the king saw a watcher and a holy one coming down from heaven, and saying, Hew the tree down, and destroy it; yet leave the stump of its roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and *let* its portion *be* with the beasts of the field, till seven times shall pass over him;<sup>24</sup> This *is* the interpretation, O king, and this *is* the decree of the most High, which is come upon my lord the king:<sup>25</sup> That **they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field**, and they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and they shall wet thee with the dew of heaven, and seven times shall pass over thee, **till thou shalt know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men**, and giveth it to whomsoever he will.<sup>26</sup> And whereas they commanded to leave the stump of the tree roots; **thy kingdom shall be sure to thee**, after that thou shalt have known that

**4:8 Belteshazzar.** See [note on 1:7](#).

**4:9** Although he spoke in pagan terms Nebuchadnezzar stated an important truth. The presence of God's Spirit in an individual has remarkable effects. Here his ability to give extraordinary insight into God's mystery, such as was later given to Paul and the church (1Co 2:6-16), is in view.

**4:9 Spirit of the holy gods.** See [2:47](#) and [note on 2:19](#).

**4:10 Behold a tree.** See [Eze 31](#) for an extensive ' description of a nation (Assyria), using the imagery of a tree. Similar imagery is found in [Ps 1:3](#); [37:35](#); [52:8](#); [92:12](#); [Jer 11:16-17](#) and [17:8](#) (see also [Mt 13:32](#)).

**4:11 Reached to heaven.** The term "sky" may also be translated "heaven," a key term in this chapter. The tree represented Nebuchadnezzar's kingdom reaching from Earth to heaven ([vv. 11, 20, 22](#)) and protecting birds, which defy the separation of the two spheres ([vv. 12, 21](#)). In truth the king was not only subject to the judgment of heaven for his pride ([vv. 13, 23, 31](#)) but also dependent on the God of heaven for his existence ([vv. 15, 22, 25, 33](#)) and sanity ([v. 34](#)).

**4:13 Watcher.** Although Nebuchadnezzar continued speaking in terms of his pagan religion, he acknowledged that he saw a holy, heavenly being in his vision. This common ancient Near Eastern belief fits well with the Biblical truth that God involves himself in Earth's affairs through revelations by angels.

**4:15 Let it be.** From Hebrew pronoun "he" it becomes clear that the

dream concerned a human being and not just a tree. See [note on verse 22](#).

**4:16 Let a beast's heart be given to him.** Nebuchadnezzar may have suffered from a recognized mental illness called lycanthropy which comes from the Greek words *lukos* ("wolf") and *anthropos* ("man") in which a person is deluded into behaving like a wolf or some other animal ([v. 33](#); see also [note on 4:33](#)).

**Seven times.** Seven periods of an unspecified duration (cf. [vv. 23, 25](#)). Most interpreters conclude that "time" represents a period of one year. [Verse 33](#) suggests that the period was longer than a day, week or month.

**4:22 It is thou, O king.** With this statement—much like that of Nathan to David ([2Sa 12:7](#))—a direct application was made to Nebuchadnezzar.

**4:25 They shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field.** In words more specific than those in [verse 15](#) Daniel indicated the form of mental illness that God would bring upon the mighty Nebuchadnezzar. Similar symptoms occasionally afflicted King George III of England (1738-1820) and Otto of Bavaria (1848-1916). See [note on 4:16](#).

**Till thou shalt know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men.** The purpose of Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation was to compel him to recognize God's sovereignty. See [WCF 2.2](#).

**4:26 Thy kingdom shall be sure to thee.** Nebuchadnezzar was

” *Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely*  
Lord Acton

the heavens do rule. <sup>27</sup> Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thy iniquities by showing mercy to the poor; if it may be a lengthening of thy tranquillity. <sup>28</sup> All this came upon the king Nebuchadnezzar. <sup>29</sup> At the end of twelve months he walked in the palace of the kingdom of Babylon. <sup>30</sup> The king spoke, and said, Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honor of my majesty? <sup>31</sup> While the word *was* in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, *saying*, O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; The kingdom hath departed from thee. <sup>32</sup> And they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling *shall be* with the beasts of the field: they shall make thee to eat grass as oxen, and seven times shall pass over thee, until thou shalt know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will. <sup>33</sup> The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and *ate grass as oxen*, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' *feathers*, and his nails like birds' *claws*. <sup>34</sup> And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up my eyes to heaven, and my understanding returned to me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honored him that liveth for ever, whose dominion *is* an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom *is* from generation to generation. <sup>35</sup> And all the inhabitants of the earth *are* reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and *among* the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say to him, What doest thou? <sup>36</sup> At the same time my reason returned to me; and for the glory of my kingdom, my honor and brightness returned to me; and my counselors and my lords sought to me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added to me. <sup>37</sup> Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honor the **King of heaven**, all whose works *are* truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase.

**5** **Belshazzar the king** made a **great feast** to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand. <sup>2</sup> **Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine**, commanded to bring the **golden and silver vessels** which **his father** Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple which *was* in Jerusalem; that the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, might drink in them. <sup>3</sup> Then they brought the golden vessels that were taken out of the temple of the house of God which *was* at Jerusalem; and the king, and his princes, his wives, and his concubines, drank in them.

<sup>4</sup> They drank wine, and **praised the gods** of gold, and of silver, of brass, of iron, of wood, and of stone. <sup>5</sup> In the same hour came forth fingers of a man's hand, and wrote over against the candlestick upon the plaster of the wall of the king's palace: and the king saw the part of the hand that wrote. <sup>6</sup> Then the king's countenance was changed, and his thoughts troubled him, so that the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against another. <sup>7</sup> The king cried aloud to bring in **the astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the**

assured that, in spite of the severity and length of his illness, he would regain the throne subsequent to his acknowledgment of God's sovereignty. Heaven rules. For the first time in Scripture "heaven" is used as a substitute name for God (cf. v. 37). Compare Matt 5:3 with Lk 6:20.

4:30 See WLC 105.

4:33 **Ate grass as oxen.** Because Nebuchadnezzar exhibited traits characteristic of oxen, the form of his mental illness is sometimes termed boanthropy. See [note on 4:16](#).

4:34–69,37–34 Although Nebuchadnezzar confessed God's sovereignty in no uncertain terms, he never explicitly affirmed the God of Israel as the only supreme Creator of the universe. See WCF 2.2: 5.1.

4:37 **King of heaven.** This unique term brings together the theme of the chapter: the rule of God from heaven (see 4:26 and its [note](#)).

5:1–31 **Judgment on Belshazzar.** Daniel turned next to an account of God's judgment against Belshazzar. In this narrative the king is condemned for his impudent disregard for the holiness of Israel's God and of his temple.

5:1 **Belshazzar the king.** Belshazzar means "Bel, protect the king." It is not to be confused with Beltshazzar, the Babylonian name given to Daniel (see [note on 1:7](#)). From Babylonian sources we know that Nabonidus, Nebuchadnezzar's son-in-law, was the last king of Babylon. Belshazzar, the eldest son of Nabonidus, was made co-regent with his father and placed in charge of affairs in Babylon while Nabonidus spent

extensive periods of time at Tema in Arabia. The events of this chapter took place in 539 B.C., the year of Babylon's fall to the Persians and of the edict releasing Israelites from captivity. 42 years after the death of Nebuchadnezzar in 563 B.C.

**Great feast.** The banquet scene juxtaposes the splendor of the event and the divine judgment that would soon be meted out (cf. [Ge 40:20–22](#); [Mk 6:21–28](#)).

5:2 **Belshazzar, while he tasted the wine.** Under the influence of alcohol Belshazzar committed a sacrilegious act. Even from a heathen standpoint the holy things of other religions were to be held in reverence.

**Golden and silver vessels ... taken out of the temple which was in Jerusalem.** See [note on 1:2](#).

**His father.** Nebuchadnezzar is called the father of Belshazzar here and in [verses 11, 13 and 18](#), and in [verse 22](#) Belshazzar is called the "son" of Nebuchadnezzar. Although we know that Belshazzar was the immediate son of Nabonidus, not Nebuchadnezzar, the terms father and son were often used in the ancient world in the broader sense of "ancestor" or "predecessor" and "descendant" or "successor." respectively. It is likely that Belshazzar was the grandson of Nebuchadnezzar through his mother, Nitocris.

5:4 **Praised the gods.** The temple vessels were defiled not only by being put to profane use but also by being used to honor the false deities of Babylon.

5:7 **The astrologers, the Chaldeans, and the sooth-sayers.** See

sooth-sayers. *And* the king spoke and said to the wise *men* of Babylon, **Whoever shall read this writing, and show me the interpretation of it**, shall be clothed with scarlet, and *have* a chain of gold about his neck, and shall be **the third ruler in the kingdom**.<sup>8</sup> Then came in all the king's wise *men*: but **they could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation of it**.<sup>9</sup> Then was the king Belshazzar greatly troubled, and his countenance was changed in him, and his lords were astonished.<sup>10</sup> *Now* **the queen** by reason of the words of the king and his lords came into the banquet house: *and* the queen spoke and said, O king, live for ever: let not thy thoughts trouble thee, nor let thy countenance be changed:<sup>11</sup> There is a man in thy kingdom, in whom *is* **the spirit of the holy gods**; and in the days of thy father light and understanding and wisdom, like the wisdom of the gods, was found in him; whom the king Nebuchadnezzar thy father, the king, *I say*, thy father, made master of the magicians, astrologers, Chaldeans, *and* sooth-sayers;<sup>12</sup> Forasmuch as an excellent spirit, and knowledge, and understanding, the interpreting of dreams, and showing of hard sentences, and dissolving of doubts, **were found in the same Daniel**, whom the king named **Belteshazzar**: now let Daniel be called, and he will show the interpretation.<sup>13</sup> Then was Daniel brought in before the king. *And* the king spoke and said to Daniel, *Art* thou that Daniel, who *art* of the children of the captivity of Judah, whom the king my father brought out of Judea?<sup>14</sup> I have even heard of thee, that the spirit of the gods *is* in thee, and *that* light and understanding and excellent wisdom is found in thee.<sup>15</sup> And now the wise *men*, the astrologers, have been brought in before me, that they should read this writing, and make known to me the interpretation of it, but they could not show the interpretation of the thing:<sup>16</sup> And I have heard of thee, that thou canst make interpretations, and dissolve doubts: now if thou canst read the writing, and make known to me the interpretation of it, thou shalt be clothed with scarlet, and *have* a chain of gold about thy neck, and shalt be **the third ruler in the kingdom**.<sup>17</sup> Then Daniel answered and said before the king, **Let thy gifts be to thyself**, and give thy rewards to another; yet I will read the writing to the king, and make known to him the interpretation.<sup>18</sup> O thou king, **the most high God gave Nebuchadnezzar thy father a kingdom, and majesty, and glory, and honor**:<sup>19</sup> **And for the majesty that he gave him, all people, nations, and languages, trembled and feared before him: whom he would he slew; and whom he would he kept alive; and whom he would he set up; and whom he would he put down**.<sup>20</sup> But when his heart was lifted up, and his mind hardened in pride, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and they took his glory from him:<sup>21</sup> And he was driven from the sons of men; and his heart was made like the beasts, and his dwelling *was* with the wild asses: they fed him with grass like oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven; till he knew that **the most high God ruleth** in the kingdom of men, and *that* he appointeth over it whomsoever he will.<sup>22</sup> And **thou his son**, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thy heart, **though thou knewest all this**;<sup>23</sup> But hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of his house before thee, and thou, and thy lords, thy wives, and thy concubines, have drank wine in them; and thou hast praised the gods of silver, and gold, of brass, iron, wood, and stone, which see not, nor hear, nor know: and the God in whose hand thy breath *is*, and whose *are* all thy ways, thou hast not glorified.<sup>24</sup> **Then** was the part of the hand sent from him; and this writing was written.<sup>25</sup> And this *is* the writing that was written, **MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN**.<sup>26</sup> This *is* the

notes on 1:20 and 2:2 (cf. 2:27; 4:7).

**Whoever shall read this writing, and show me the interpretation of it.** Once again the king demanded a double requirement: to declare the portent and then to interpret it (cf. 2:3).

**The third ruler in the kingdom.** Next in power under Nabonidus and his co-regent Belshazzar (see note on 5:1).

**5:8 They could not read the writing, nor make known to the king the interpretation of it.** See 2:2–13 and 4:7; see also Ge 41:8.

**5:10 The queen.** It is unlikely that she was a consort of Belshazzar since these women were already present at the banquet (vv. 2-3). She may have been the widow of Nebuchadnezzar, but it is more likely that she was Nitocris, the wife of Nabonidus, daughter of Nebuchadnezzar and mother of Belshazzar.

**5:11 The spirit of the holy gods.** See 4:8. It is not surprising that the queen mother was more familiar with the events of Daniel's time than was Belshazzar. It is likely that Daniel was in his 80s by 539 B.C. He had been a young man when taken to Babylon 66 years earlier in 605 B.C. (see note on 1:1).

**5:12 Were found in the same Daniel.** This divine enablement can be described theologically as the presence of God's Spirit in an individual or as a person possessing a remarkable spirit.

**Belteshazzar.** See note on 1:7.

**5:16 The third ruler in the kingdom.** See note on verse 7.

**5:17 Let thy gifts be to thyself.** Some think that Daniel rejected

Belshazzar's offer of reward not only because he did not seek such honors but also because of his consciousness that it was only by God's mercy that he had been able to respond to the king's request; he did not want to use his God-given role as a means of personal profit (Ge 14:23). Yet he had accepted such rewards before (2:48) and did so again later (v. 29). Perhaps he was avoiding any pressure to modify the ominous message (Nu 22:18; Mic 3:5, 11).

**5:18 The most high God gave.** See 2:37 and 4:36.

**Nebuchadnezzar thy father.** See note on verse 2.

**5:20–21** See 4:31–33.

**5:21 The most high God ruleth.** This statement summarizes the book's theology (see "Introduction: Purpose and Distinctives").

**5:22 Thou his son.** See note on verse 2.

**Though thou knewest all this.** Because the king was without excuse—even more so than his father—the time of mercy had passed (see 1Ti 1:13). See WLC 151.

**5:23** See WLC 105.

**5:24 Then.** The writing on the wall was God's answer to the arrogant challenge presented by Belshazzar's pride and defiance of the God who had demonstrated his existence and sovereignty in the time of Nebuchadnezzar.

**5:25 MENE, MENE, TEKEL, UPHARSIN.** Literally, "numbered, numbered, weighed, divided" or "mina [a unit of weight], mina, shekel, half shekel."

interpretation of the thing: **MENE**; God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it. <sup>27</sup> **TEKEL**; Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting. <sup>28</sup> **PERES**; Thy kingdom is divided, and given to the Medes and Persians. <sup>29</sup> Then **commanded Belshazzar**, and they clothed Daniel with scarlet, and *put* a chain of gold about his neck, and made a proclamation concerning him, that he should be the third ruler in the kingdom. <sup>30</sup> In that night was **Belshazzar** the king of the Chaldeans slain. <sup>31</sup> And **Darius the Median** took the kingdom, *being* about sixty and two years old.

**6** It pleased **Darius** to set over the kingdom a hundred and twenty princes, who should be over the whole kingdom; <sup>2</sup> And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel *was* first: that the princes might give accounts to

**5:26 MENE.** The original script for this word could be understood as either a verb or a noun. Daniel read it as a verb meaning “numbered” or “counted” and interpreted it as signifying that the days and years of Belshazzar’s reign had been determined by God and were about to end.

**5:27 TEKEL.** This word could also be understood as either a verb or a noun. Daniel read it as a verb meaning “weighed” and interpreted it as signifying that Belshazzar failed to measure up to God’s standards of righteousness.

**5:28 PERES.** Daniel construed this word as a verb meaning “divided” and interpreted it to signify that Belshazzar’s kingdom would be taken from him and given to the Medes and Persians. If, as is likely, those present at the banquet understood the three terms as nouns that simply indicated various monetary weights (mene, a weight equivalent to 60 Babylonian shekels; tekel, the shekel; peres, a half shekel), then it is not surprising that they failed to comprehend the significance of the inscription. Medes and Persians. See “Introduction: Purpose and Distinctives.” See also BC 36.

**5:29 Commanded Belshazzar.** Like Nebuchadnezzar Belshazzar honored Daniel (2:48), but unlike Nebuchadnezzar he did not honor

Daniel’s God (2:46–47). The honor that Daniel and his companions had repeatedly received because of their faithfulness to God had established Daniel’s credibility as a prophet. He was not a compromiser; he was faithful to God. Therefore his later prophecies (“chs. 7-12”\_7:1>) could be fully trusted.

**5:30 Was Belshazzar ... slain.** Ancient Near Eastern texts and the Greek historians Herodotus and Xenophon record that Babylon was taken in a surprise attack by the Persians while the Babylonians were engaged in reveling and dancing.

**5:31 Darius the Median.** It has long been alleged that this and other references to “Darius the Mede” in the book of Daniel (6:1, 6, 9, 25, 28; 9:1; 11:1) are historical errors. See [note on 6:1](#).

**6:1–28 Deliverance From the Den of Lions.** The prophet recounted his treatment under Darius the Mede, who succeeded Belshazzar. During his reign Daniel was thrown into a lions’ den, and only through faith did he emerge unscathed.

**6:1 Darius.** See [note on 5:31](#). While it is true that Darius the Mede is not referred to in extant historical sources outside the Scripture and that there was no interval between Belshazzar/Nabonidus (see [note on 5:1N](#)) and the accession of Cyrus of Persia, this does not

#### Who was Darius the Mede?

He is first mentioned in 5:31. Some (mainly critical, i.e., liberal) theologians, advocating a late (so-called „Maccabean“) dating of the book of Daniel (according to them around 165 B.C.), claim that (1) Darius Medes never existed because he

ruled the world empire for several years before it fell into the hands of the Persians.

As a result, advocates of the Maccabean (late) date can claim that the four kingdoms of Nebuchadnezzar’s dream (Dan 2) are (1) Babylonian; (2) Median; (3) Persian; and (4) Greek, which gives them the advantage of limiting the horizon of Daniel’s prophecies to no further than 165 B.C. (If the book was written at this time, all of the alleged „prophecies“ could be explained in retrospect by looking back at the historical events *after they occurred*. The problem with the traditional identification of the fourth kingdom as Rome for liberals is that such a view presupposes actual true predictive prophecy, which rationalist higher criticism fundamentally does not allow.)

The tenability of the Maccabean date hypothesis therefore depends on the above explanation of „Darius the Mede“ (since according to this explanation the Median kingdom pre-dates the Persian kingdom). Therefore, this figure is very important; its identification has serious theological implications.

However, the Persian Darius I, son of Hystapes, cannot be identified with Darius the Mede for several reasons:

“Even in literature and art, no man who bothers about originality will ever be original: whereas if you simply try to tell the truth (without caring twopence how often it has been told before) you will, nine times out of ten, become original without ever having noticed it.

C. S. Lewis

is not mentioned in other ancient documents; (2) the name Darius was used by an unknown Maccabean author, poorly acquainted with Persian history, and confused it with the legendary Darius I (255–484) of Persia (not the Medes); (3) the author erroneously assumed that Babylon was conquered by Medea, not Persia, and that under the leadership of this legendary „Darius“ the Medes

them, and the king should have no damage. <sup>3</sup> Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an **excellent spirit** was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm. <sup>4</sup> Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find no occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. <sup>5</sup> Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find *it* against him concerning **the law of his God**. <sup>6</sup> Then these presidents and princes assembled to the king, and said thus to him, King Darius, live for ever. <sup>7</sup> **All** the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counselors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that **whoever shall ask a petition of any God** or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. <sup>8</sup> Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it may not be changed, according to **the law of the Medes and Persians**, which altereth not. <sup>9</sup> Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree. <sup>10</sup> Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his **windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem**, he **kneeled upon his knees three times a day**, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, **as he did before**.

necessarily mean that the book of Daniel is in error. Most likely "Darius the Mede" was a throne name for Cyrus, the founder of the Persian Empire (see [note on v. 28N](#)). It is also possible, but not as likely, that it was a designation for Gubaru, a general who defected from Nebuchadnezzar to Cyrus, led the Persian conquest of Babylon and was made governor by Cyrus over the territories the Persians had taken from the Babylonians.

**6:3 Excellent spirit.** See [1:17](#); [4:8](#) and [5:12](#).

**6:5 The law of his God.** Daniel's adversaries affirmed not only his moral integrity but also the visible nature of his piety and commitment to the God of Israel. Thus the book's major theme of Daniel's holiness and reliability is affirmed once again.

**6:7 All ... have consulted together.** The false implication was that Daniel had concurred with the proposal. These officials were hypocritical in their seeming devotion to Darius. Their scheme was an attempt to manipulate him into securing their own designs.

**Whoever shall ask a petition of any God ... except of thee.** The proposal would have seemed to Darius to be more political than religious and would have served to consolidate his authority over newly conquered territories.

**6:8 The law of the Medes and Persians.** See [Est 1:19](#) and [8:8](#).

The irrevocable nature of Persian law is also attested in extra-Biblical writings. The effect of the decree was to create a conflict for Daniel between allegiance to the Lord and obedience to human government.

**6:10 Windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem.**

See [1Ki 8:44](#) and [48](#), as well as [Ps 5:7](#) and [138:2](#).

**Kneeled upon his knees.** Standing may have been a regular posture in prayer ([1Ch 23:30](#); [Ne 9](#)). While kneeling in prostration marked a lowering of oneself, appropriate in circumstances of particular solemnity ([1Ki 8:54](#); [Ezr 9:5](#); see also [Ps 95:6](#); [Lk 22:41](#); [Ac 7:60](#); [9:40](#)).

**Three times a day.** See [Ps 55:17-18](#).

1. Darius I was a Persian by birth, a cousin of king Cyrus; he was by no means a Mede.
2. Darius I was a young man of about twenty when he murdered the impostor Gaumata (who claimed to be Cyrus's son Smerdis) in 522 BC. He could not have been 62 ([5:31](#)).
3. Darius I was not king of Babylon before Cyrus as liberal theories claim. He did not become an independent ruler until seven years after the death of Cyrus (cf. [Ezd 4:5](#)).
4. Such confusion about the nationality and chronology of Darius and Cyrus was absolutely unthinkable in the Hellenistic world of the second century BC. Students must have read Xenophon, Herodotus and other Greek historians of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. From Xenophon and Herodotus we have information about Cyrus and Darius. Any Greek writer who placed Darius before Cyrus would have ended his writing career in public ridicule; he would never be taken seriously again.

Thus, Darius Persian ([Ezra 4:5](#)) and Darius-Median ([Dan 5:31](#)) have nothing to do with each other; the confusion is only on the part of the late date theorists, not on the part of the author of Daniel.

However, it is true that archaeology has not yet discovered any mention of *Darius the Medes* from the time he lived, outside the Bible. (Until the nineteenth century, the same was true of Balsazar, the viceroy representing his father Nabonidus. Critical theologians, advocating Maccabean dating, have argued that Balsazar was another fictional character in Daniel until Babylonian tablets from his time were discovered confirming that Balsazar served as a junior king in the last years of his father Nabonidus' reign. Cf. [note on 5:1](#)).

Nevertheless, we can identify Darius the Mede. There are several indications in the book of Daniel that Darius was not a sovereign king, but was temporarily placed on the throne by some higher authority. In verse [9:1](#), we read that „was made king“. The passive root *hofal* is used here for the verb form „homlak“ (הִמְלַךְ) instead of the common „malak“ (מָלַךְ „became king“) used in the context of gaining the throne by conquest or inheritance (e.g., [1Sam 13:1](#)). Similarly, in verse [5:31](#) we read that Darius „possessed the kingdom“ („qabbel“ קָבַל), as if it had been conferred on him by a higher authority.

The very name Darius (Old Persian *Da-ri-ya-(h)u-(ú-)ish*/ 𐎠𐎼𐎷𐎡𐎴 - 𐎠𐎹𐎷𐎡𐎴, Heb. דָּרְיוֹשׁ)

” *Enemy-occupied territory—that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us to take part in a great campaign of sabotage.*  
C.S. Lewis

<sup>11</sup> Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. <sup>12</sup> Then they came near, and spoke before the king concerning the king's decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a *petition* of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing *is* true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. <sup>13</sup> Then they answered and said before the king, That Daniel, who *is of the children of the captivity of Judah*, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day. <sup>14</sup> Then the king, when he heard *these* words, was much displeased with himself, and set *his heart on Daniel to deliver him*: and he labored till the setting of the sun to deliver him. <sup>15</sup> Then these men assembled to the king, and said to the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians *is*, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed. <sup>16</sup> Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast *him* into the den of lions. *Now* the king spoke and said to Daniel, *Thy God* whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. <sup>17</sup> And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king *sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords*; that the

**As he did before.** Evidently Daniel's prayer habits were public knowledge, a mark of his genuine piety.

**6:13 Of the children of the captivity of Judah.** This ethnic identification of Daniel is perhaps indicative of prejudice toward the Jews on the part of the other officials (cf. 3:8). That Daniel's ethnic identity was widely known reveals that he had not compromised his heritage in favor of success in captivity—an important lesson to the readers.

**6:14 Set his heart on Daniel to deliver him.** Darius immediately perceived that he had been victimized by the intrigue of his own officials in order to trap Daniel. His appreciation for Daniel remained unshaken.

**6:16 Thy God ... he will deliver thee.** Against his own will Darius was forced to comply with the decree. Nevertheless, he hoped that Daniel's God would intervene on behalf of his faithful servant.

**6:17 Sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords.** Signet rings and cylinder seals were commonly used by the Assyrians, Babylonians and Persians. The ring or cylinder was rolled across impressionable clay to leave the personal mark of the owner of the seal. Breaking open whatever was sealed in this way would be a violation of the law.

is probably related to *dara*, which appears in Avestan (a dead northeastern ancient Iranian language) as an expression for a king. Like the appellation *augustus* among the Romans, the surname *dārayavush* („royal“) may have been a special honorary title that could also serve as a proper name, like the English surname „King“.

So it seems that soon after the defeat of Babylon by the Medo-Persian armies, Cyrus' personal presence was forced by another front of his expanding empire. It seemed expedient to him, therefore, to entrust the kingdom to Gubar-Darius with the title of King of Babylon, to rule for about a year before Cyrus personally returned for his coronation ceremony in the temple of Marduk. After this year's reign as viceroy, Darius remained as governor of Babylon, but the crown was handed over to his superior ruler Cyrus (who later passed it on to his eldest son Cambyses, cf. [note on 11:2](#), at his coronation as king of Babylon).

This scenario is supported by the text of the book in that Daniel nowhere mentions any later year of Darius' reign than „first“ (9:1), indicating its very short duration. Even if this were to mean that the one-year reign belonged to the Medes (we know it did not; it belonged to Persian Cyrus), a

one-year empire could hardly have defended its legitimate position as the number two kingdom in a series of empires of considerably greater durability: the Babylonian lasted 73 years, the Persian 208 years, the Greek would have had 167 years of existence by 165 BC.

In addition, a pun on Daniel's interpretation of the inscription on the wall in 5:28, which combines two meanings of the same root P-R-S (פָּרַס): *p̄risat*/ (פָּרִיסָה „divided“) and *p̄rās* (לְמַדְי וּפָרַס „given to the Medes and Persians“), while assuring that the author of the book wrote in the belief that kingdom number one (Babylonian) would pass under to the rule of the Persians already allied with the Medes and thus becomes kingdom number two. The book of Daniel leaves no room for critical speculation about the earlier Median kingdom, which the author of the book may have had in mind.

The fourth kingdom, then, is Rome, the only one that has been able to subdue Greece (2:40), and during whose existence the eternal kingdom of which there will be no end (2:44) – the church – has come into being by divine intervention. (Cf. chart [Daniel's Visions of the Four Kingdoms](#) on p. 6).



purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel. <sup>18</sup> Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep went from him. <sup>19</sup> Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste to the den of lions. <sup>20</sup> And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice to Daniel: *and* the king spoke and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions? <sup>21</sup> Then said Daniel to the king, O king, live for ever. <sup>22</sup> **My God hath sent his angel**, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocence was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt. <sup>23</sup> Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and **commanded that they should take Daniel out of the den**. So Daniel was taken out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God. <sup>24</sup> And the king commanded, and they brought those men who had accused Daniel, and they cast *them* into the den of lions, them, their children, and their wives; and the lions had the mastery of them, and broke all their bones in pieces before they came to the bottom of the den. <sup>25</sup> Then king Darius wrote to all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied to you. <sup>26</sup> I make a **decree**, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he *is* the living God, and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom *that* which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion *shall be even* to the end. <sup>27</sup> He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and on earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions. <sup>28</sup> So this **Daniel prospered** in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

In the **first year of Belshazzar** king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream and visions of his head upon his bed: then he wrote the dream, *and* told the sum of the matters. <sup>2</sup> Daniel spoke and said, I saw in my vision by night, and behold, the four winds of heaven strove upon the **great sea**. <sup>3</sup> And **four great beasts** came up from the sea, diverse one from another. <sup>4</sup> The first *was* like a **lion**, and had eagles' wings: I beheld till its **wings were plucked**, and it was lifted up from the earth, and made to stand upon the feet as a man, and a man's heart was given to it. <sup>5</sup> And behold **another beast**, a second, like a bear, and it raised itself on one side, and *it had* three ribs in the mouth of it between the teeth of it: and they said thus to it, Arise, devour much flesh. <sup>6</sup> After this I beheld, and lo **another, like a leopard**, which had upon the back of it four wings of a fowl; the beast had also

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**6:22 My God hath sent his angel.** Likely the angel of the Lord (see [note on 3:28](#)).

**6:23 Commanded that they should take Daniel out of the den.** Darius could do this without violating the initial decree, since its demands had already been fulfilled.

**6:26–27** See [2:47](#); [3:17–18](#) and [28–29](#); [4:2–3](#) and [28–37](#) and [5:18–29](#). As in the previous narratives the Lord revealed himself to be greater than human rulers or kingdoms, for his sovereignty extends over nature and history. But this decree went far beyond those earlier confessions in acknowledging God as a living, enduring and saving deity, whose kingdom is eternal and secure.

**6:26 Decree.** Darius's decree does not imply that he actually converted from pagan polytheism to faith in Daniel's God alone any more than did Cyrus's proclamation that God had instructed him to send the Jews home ([Ezr 1:3–4](#); [Isa 44:28](#); [45:4](#)).

**6:28 Daniel prospered.** The major theme of God's blessing toward Daniel appears again. Daniel remained faithful, refusing to compromise. For this reason he rose in prominence under both Babylonian and Persian kings. This fact exalted Daniel as a faithful Israelite whose prophecies could be trusted. the reign of Darius and the reign of Cyrus. The wording may be understood in two ways: (1) Daniel prospered under the rule of Gubaru (see [note on v. 1](#)) as well as under Cyrus; or (2) Daniel prospered under the reign of Darius, even in the reign of Cyrus. In the latter case, Darius the Mede and Cyrus are understood to be two names for the same ruler (see [note on v. 1](#)).

**7:1–28 Vision of the Four Beasts.** Daniel reported his dream of four beasts. The dream traces the history of foreign kingdoms oppressing Israel until their earthly dominion was given to the "one like a son of man" and to the saints.

**7:1–12:13 The Visions.** In these chapters Daniel turned from historical narrative to reports of visions. These visions depend on the two main themes set forth in the first six chapters of the book: Israel's God was in control of all nations, and Daniel could be trusted as God's uncompromising prophet. These chapters prepared an exiled Israel for the long delay of the restoration and the trials to come under the

control of foreign powers. They also encouraged the people of God not to give up hope that God's kingdom would come at the end of these trials. Daniel touched on four main topics: the four beasts ([7:1–28](#)), the ram and the goat ([8:1–27](#)), the "seventy weeks" ([9:1–27](#)) and the future of God's people ([10:1–12:13](#)).

**7:1 The first year of Belshazzar.** See [note on 5:1](#). It is not known whether Belshazzar's coregency with Nabonidus began at the same time as the accession of Nabonidus (556 B.C.) or a few years later. In any case, the events of this chapter (and [ch. 8](#)) are lobe placed chronologically between those of chapters 4 and 5.

**7:2 Great sea.** Whether or not this is a reference to the Mediterranean Sea is immaterial. What is clear is that the sea is symbolical the chaotic restlessness that characterized the sinful nations oppressing Israel. See the interpretation given in [verse 17](#) and in [Isa 17:12–13](#) and [57:20](#).

**7:3 Four great beasts.** These four beasts represent four kingdoms ([vv. 17, 23](#)). It is clear that there is a close correspondence between the four kingdoms of Nebuchadnezzar's vision of the image in chapter 2 and those symbolized by the beasts in this chapter. For identification of the four kingdoms, see chart, "Visions in Daniel," at Da 2.

**7:4 A lion ... eagle's wings.** The lion with eagle's wings is an appropriate symbol for the Babylonian Empire (cf. [Jer 50:44](#); [Eze 17:3](#)). Winged lions were common Babylonian art forms often placed at the entrances of important public buildings.

**Wings were plucked ... a man's heart was given to it.** Perhaps this is a reference to Nebuchadnezzar's humiliation and later restoration following a seven-year period of insanity ([4:1–37](#)).

**7:5 Another beast ... like a bear.** The Medo-Persian kingdom is symbolized by a beast with a voracious appetite. The raised side may represent the superior status of Persia, and the three ribs likely point to Persia's conquests over Lydia (546 B.C.), Babylon (539 B.C.) and Egypt (525 B.C.). See [note on 8:3](#).

**7:6 Another, like a leopard.** The Greek Empire is symbolized by a leopard, which is known for its speed. Alexander the Great (356–323 B.C.) conquered the Persian Empire with great rapidity. He encour-

four heads; and dominion was given to it.<sup>7</sup> After this I saw in the night visions, and behold a fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly; and it had great iron teeth: it devoured and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet: and it was diverse from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns.<sup>8</sup> I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots: and behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.<sup>9</sup> I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.<sup>10</sup> A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set and the books were opened.<sup>11</sup> I beheld then because of the voice of the great words which the horn spoke: I beheld even till the beast was slain, and his body destroyed, and given to the burning flame.<sup>12</sup> As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and time.<sup>13</sup> I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.<sup>14</sup> And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.<sup>15</sup> I Daniel was grieved in my spirit in the midst of my body, and the visions of my head troubled me.<sup>16</sup> I came near to one of them that stood by, and asked him the truth of all this. So he told me, and made me know the interpretation of the things.<sup>17</sup> These great beasts, which are four, are four kings, which shall arise out of the earth.<sup>18</sup> But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.<sup>19</sup> Then I would know the truth of the fourth beast, which was diverse from all the others,

tered the Persians in three major battles: (1) At the Granicus River (334 B.C.) he gained entry into Asia Minor. (2) At Issus (333 B.C.) he was enabled to occupy Syria, Canaan and Egypt. (3) At Arbela (331 B.C.) he destroyed the last Persian army and pushed onward toward India. See also 8:5–8. Shortly after his premature death at age thirty-three the empire he had established divided into four parts: Macedonia under Cassander, Thrace and Asia Minor under Lysimachus, Syria under Seleucus and Egypt under Ptolemy.

**7:7 A fourth beast ... dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly.** History has revealed that this unidentified beast represents Rome, the kingdom that ultimately assimilated the various parts of the divided Greek kingdom.

**It had ten horns.** The ten horns symbolize ten kings or kingdoms arising from the Roman kingdom (v. 24). It is not clear whether these horns are successive or contemporaneous. Some suggest that they represent a second phase of the fourth kingdom, "a revived Roman Empire" of the last days, but there is no evidence of such a distinction.

**7:8 Another little horn, before whom there were three of the first horns plucked up by the roots.** The ten horns are prior in time to the "little horn" which uproots three of them. Here is another phase of the fourth kingdom. Many interpreters have suggested that the little horn symbolizes the rise of the antichrist (2Th 2:3–4, 8). If so, this is the first Scriptural reference to the antichrist.

**Eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things.** The imagery suggests that this horn represents an individual rather than a kingdom.

**7:9 The Ancient of days did sit.** The title "Ancient of Days" occurs in the Bible only in this chapter (v. 13, 22). A similar expression appears in Ugaritic texts to designate the great God El. It is clearly used as a designation for God, who is sitting to judge, and it implies that God is eternal or that he has ruled from ancient times.

**Garment ... hair.** Although God appeared in magnificent glory to Daniel, he still revealed himself in a recognizably human form so that Daniel could grasp what he saw.

**His throne ... his wheels.** The depiction of God's throne resembles that of Ezekiel's vision (Eze 1:15–28). As in other parts of the ancient world the divine throne is depicted as having wheels, like a mobile chariot throne used most notably in battle. Similar motifs lie behind the pillar of fire that led Israel during the Exodus (Ex 13:21–22).

**7:10 The books were opened.** See 12:1 (see also Ex 32:32; Ps 149:9; Isa 4:3; 65:6; Mal 3:16; Lk 10:20; Rev 5:1–5; 6:12–16; 20:12). See BC 37.

**7:11–12** A contrast is drawn between the complete destruction of the

fourth kingdom and the measure of continuance granted the preceding kingdoms as their people and customs were absorbed into the succeeding kingdoms.

**7:13 One like the son of man.** The term "son of man" may mean simply "a man." The Hebrew equivalent is used for Daniel in 8:17 and is used many times of Daniel's contemporary Ezekiel (e.g., Eze 2:1, 3, 6). In contrast to the beasts who misruled the earth, this "one" will preside over creation as God had intended before the fall; he will have dominion over the beasts (Ge 1:26–28; Ps 8). Daniel may have been the earliest witness to this special use of "son of man." Later Jewish apocalyptic literature written between the Old and New Testaments draws upon this passage and speaks of the "son of man" as a supernatural human being who brings the power of heaven to Earth. Daniel saw someone like a man; i.e., someone who was to be compared with a man yet was somehow qualitatively different (v. 14). The expression "son of man" is used 69 times in the Synoptic Gospels and 12 times in John's Gospel to refer to Christ. It is in fact the most common title Jesus used of himself.

**With the clouds of heaven.** Elsewhere in the Old Testament only God is said to appear on clouds (Ps 104:3; Isa 19:1). The One like a man originates in heaven and comes by divine initiative. He is the same as the rock cut out of the mountain, but not by human hands (2:45; see note on 7:14).

**7:14 There was given him dominion.** God gives him vice-regency over all the nations. He fulfills the symbolic rule of the rock cut out of a mountain (2:44–45).

**All people ... should serve him ... his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.** The "son of man" whom Daniel envisioned was none other than the great son of David, the Messiah. Isaiah also spoke of his kingdom as never ending (Isa 9:7). Jesus clearly confirmed this Messianic connection by an allusion to this passage. For this he was accused by the religious leaders of his day of blasphemy (Mt 26:64–65; Mk 14:62–64). In serving him, people serve God.

**7:15 Was grieved in my spirit ... troubled me.** Daniel was horrified by what he saw and asked an angel to elucidate the vision.

**7:18 The saints of the most High.** See verses 21–22, 25 and 27. Not angels but true believers who will share responsibility in the administration of the kingdom (1Co 6:1–11; 2Ti 2:12; Rev 22:5).

**Shall take the kingdom.** There is close identification between the "son of man" as King (v. 13–14) and the "saints of the Most High" as those who participate in his kingdom (see "possessed the kingdom" at v. 22; see also v. 27).

**For ever.** See 6:26, 7:14 and their notes.

exceeding dreadful, whose teeth *were of* iron, and his nails *of* brass; *which* devoured, broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with his feet;<sup>20</sup> And of the ten horns that *were* in his head, and *of* the other which came up, and before whom three fell; even *of* that horn that had eyes, and a mouth that spoke very great things, whose look *was* more stout than his fellows.<sup>21</sup> I beheld, and **the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them;**<sup>22</sup> **Until the Ancient of days came,** and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints **possessed the kingdom.**<sup>23</sup> Thus he said, The fourth beast shall be the fourth kingdom upon earth, which shall be diverse from all kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, and shall tread it down, and break it in pieces.<sup>24</sup> And the ten horns out of this kingdom *are* ten kings *that* shall arise: and another shall rise after them; and he shall be diverse from the first, and he shall subdue **three kings.**<sup>25</sup> And he shall speak **great words against the most High,** and shall **wear out the saints** of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand **until a time and times and the dividing of time.**<sup>26</sup> But **the judgment** shall sit, and they shall take away his dominion to consume and to destroy *it* to the end.<sup>27</sup> And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, **shall be given to the people of the saints** of the most High, whose kingdom *is* an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.<sup>28</sup> Hitherto *is* the end of the matter. As for me Daniel, my cogitations **much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me:** but I **kept the matter in my heart.**

**In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar** a vision appeared to me, *even to me*, Daniel, after that which appeared to me at the first.<sup>2</sup> And I saw in a vision; and it came to pass, when **I saw, that I was** at Shushan *in* the palace, which *is in the province of Elam*; and I saw in a vision, and I was by the **river Ulai.**<sup>3</sup> Then I lifted up my eyes, and saw, and behold, there stood before the river **a ram which had two horns:** and the *two* horns *were* high; but one *was* higher than the other, and the higher came up last.<sup>4</sup> I saw the ram **pushing westward, and northward, and southward;** so that no beasts might stand before him, neither *was there any* that could deliver out of his hand; but he did according to his will, and **became great.**<sup>5</sup> And as I was considering, behold, a he-goat came from the west **on the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground:** and the goat *had a*

**7:21 The same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them.** Daniel recounted additional information about the hostility of the little horn (v. 8) toward the people of God (cf. [Rev 13:7](#)).

**7:22 Until the Ancient of days came.** Although the little horn (v. 8) would prevail for a time against God's people, in the end he would fall under the judgment of God (cf. [Zec 14:1-4](#); [Rev 13:7-17](#); [19:20](#)).

**Possessed the kingdom.** God's intervention in history will lead to what the New Testament calls "the kingdom of God" (see theological article "The Kingdom of God" at [Mt 4](#)).

**7:24 Three kings.** A few of the ten, but an indefinite number.

**7:25 He shall speak great words against the most High.** More details are given of the activities of the little horn (v. 8) as a ruler who opposes God.

**Wear out the saints.** He will persecute God's people.

**Until a time and times and the dividing of time.** The word "time" is the same word used in [4:16](#) and [4:23](#) and, as there (see [note on 4:16](#)), may be understood as representing a period of one year (cf. [Rev 12:14](#)). It is best understood as symbolic of a period of time that will be shortened when God suddenly intervenes.

**7:26 The judgment.** The court of heaven (see v. 10).

**7:27 Shall be given to the people of the saints.** After God's people face the trials of oppressive kingdoms they will rule over all forever. See [note on 7:18](#).

**7:28 Much troubled me, and my countenance changed in me.** Thoughts of Israel falling under repeated and prolonged oppression from foreign powers still troubled Daniel, even though the ultimate outcome would be divine intervention resulting in victory for God's people. See also v. 15 and its [note](#).

**Kept the matter in my heart.** Daniel mentioned this to inform his readers that he did not delight in the prospect of such a future for God's people. Despite his authority in the Gentile courts of Babylon and Persia, no one could rightly accuse him of betraying his loyalty to God's people. He spoke of these future events with regret.

**8:1-27 Vision of the Ram and the Goat.** The prophet recorded a vision concerning the treatment of God's people under the Medo-Persians and Greeks.

**8:1-12:13** Daniel resumed use of the Hebrew language in the book's last five chapters. He had written [2:4-7:28](#) in Aramaic (see [note on 2:4](#)).

**8:1 In the third year of the reign of king Belshazzar.** That is, two years after Daniel's dream in chapter 7 (see [note on 7:1](#)).

**8:2 I saw, that I was.** Daniel experienced a visionary journey like that of Ezekiel ([Eze 3:10-15](#)).

**Shushan in the palace, which is in the province of Elam.** In Daniel's time Shushan was the capital of Elam, about 230 miles east of Babylon. It is unclear whether Elam was then independent or aligned with either Babylon or Media. Later, however, as one of three royal cities, Shushan became the diplomatic and administrative capital of the Persian Empire (cf. [Est 1:2](#); [Ne 1:1](#)).

**River Ulai.** This canal near Shushan connected two rivers that flowed into the Persian Gulf.

**8:3 A ram which had two horns.** Verse 20 identifies the ram and its horns as a symbol for the kings of the Medo-Persian Empire. One of the horns was longer than the other but grew up later. Medo-Persian history clarifies the symbolism here. The Medes became strong and independent of Assyria after 631 B.C. The Persians began as an insignificant segment of the Median kingdom but eventually rose to control it when Cyrus (reigned 559-530 B.C.) of Anshan (in Elam) brought Media under his control (550 B.C.). Cyrus added to his list of titles "King of the Medes." Thus both horns were long but the one representing Persia longer because it was superior in might, and later in growing because it came to power after the other.

**8:4 Pushing westward, and northward, and southward.** Cyrus initially took Asia Minor; afterward, both northern and southern Mesopotamia. Subsequent rulers extended Medo-Persian control far to the East.

**Became great.** The Persian Empire became larger and more powerful than any previous empire in ancient Near Eastern history.

**8:5 On the face of the whole earth, and touched not the ground.** This depicts the amazing rapidity of Alexander's conquests (see [note on 7:6](#)). In only three years he was able to defeat the powerful Persian Empire.

**The goat had a notable horn between his eyes.** Verse 21 identifies the goat as Greece and the large horn between his eyes as its first king. The symbolism is a clear depiction of the rise of the Greek Empire under the leadership of Alexander the Great (356-323 B.C.).

notable horn between his eyes.<sup>6</sup> And he came to the ram that had *two* horns, which I had seen standing before the river, and ran to him in the fury of his power.<sup>7</sup> And I saw him come close to the ram, and he was moved with anger against him, and smote the ram, and broke his two horns: and there was no power in the ram to stand before him, but he cast him down to the ground, and stamped upon him: and there was none that could deliver the ram out of his hand.<sup>8</sup> Therefore **the he-goat became very great: and when he was strong, the great horn was broken; and in its stead came up four notable ones** towards the four winds of heaven.<sup>9</sup> And out of one of them came forth **a little horn**, which became exceeding great, towards the south, and towards the east, and **towards the pleasant land**.<sup>10</sup> And it grew great, **even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them**.<sup>11</sup> Yes, he magnified **himself even to the prince of the host**, and by him **the daily sacrifice** was taken away, and the place of his sanctuary was cast down.<sup>12</sup> And a host was given **him against the daily sacrifice** by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground; and it practiced, and **prospered**.<sup>13</sup> Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said to that certain *saint* who spoke, How long *shall be* the vision *concerning* the daily *sacrifice*, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot?<sup>14</sup> And he said to me, **Until two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed**.<sup>15</sup> And it came to pass, when I, *even* I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man.<sup>16</sup> And I heard a man's voice between *the banks of* Ulai, which called, and said, **Gabriel**, make this *man* to understand the vision.<sup>17</sup> So he came near where I stood: and when he came, I was afraid, and fell upon my face: but he said to me, Understand, O **son of man**: for **at the time of the end shall be** the vision.<sup>18</sup> Now as he was speaking with me, I was in a deep sleep on my face towards the ground: but he touched me, and set me upright.<sup>19</sup> And he said, Behold, I will make thee know **what shall be in the last end of the indignation**: for at the time appointed the end *shall be*.<sup>20</sup> **The ram** which thou sawest having

**8:8 The he-goat became very great.** Alexander's empire quickly exceeded the Persian Empire in size. By 327 B.C. Alexander had moved eastward into what is today Afghanistan and then on to the Indus Valley.

**When he was strong, the great horn was broken.** When his own troops refused to advance farther eastward Alexander returned to Babylon, where he died at the age of thirty-two, most probably of typhoid fever.

**In its stead came up four notable ones.** Verse 22 indicates that these horns symbolize four kingdoms that emerged from Alexander's empire but were inferior in strength to its original domain. Historical records indicate that after a time of internal struggle four of Alexander's generals were able to secure portions of the former Greek Empire as their own kingdoms. See [note on 7:6](#).

**8:9 A little horn.** Verse 23 indicates that this horn symbolizes a wicked ruler who would arise in one of the four Greek kingdoms after an extended interval of time ("in the latter part of their reign"). The descriptions of the actions of this ruler ([vv. 9–14, 23–25](#)) identify him as Antiochus IV Epiphanes, the ruler of the Seleucid kingdom from 175 to 164 B.C. This horn is not to be identified with the "little horn" of [7:8](#), which would arise during the Roman rather than the Greek period.

**Toward the pleasant land.** Daniel showed his love for the promised land by this expression.

**8:10 The host of heaven.** Or the stars (cf. [Jer 33:22](#)), symbolizing the people of God (cf. [12:3; Ge 12:3; 15:5; Ex 12:41](#)) and/or a heavenly army ([Isa 14:13](#); also see [2 Maccabees 9:10](#)). Antiochus's coins picture a star above his head. Epiphanes means "God manifest." The attack against the people of God amounted to an attack against heaven itself.

**Cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground, and stamped upon them.** This is a symbolic depiction of the severe persecution of God's people under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who attempted to abolish Israel's traditional worship and way of life (see "Introduction: Purpose and Distinctives": cf. [11:21–35](#); [1 Maccabees 1:10–64](#)).

**8:11 Magnified himself even to the prince of the host.** The "Prince" is to be understood as God, the Lord of hosts. See [verse 25](#), where the designation is "Prince of princes." Antiochus IV took the name Epiphanes ("God manifest") and viewed himself as the incarnate manifestation of Zeus (the chief god of the Greek pantheon).

**The daily sacrifice was taken away.** See [verses 12–13](#) and [11:31](#). Antiochus IV ordered the cessation of all ceremonial observances related to the worship of the Lord at the Jerusalem temple and in the

cities of Judah. the place of his sanctuary was brought low. Antiochus IV not only entered the Most Holy Place and plundered the silver and gold vessels, but he also erected an altar to Zeus on top of the altar of the Lord in the temple court and offered swine upon it (see [note on 11:31](#)).

**8:12 An host was given him against the daily sacrifice.** God's people were subjected to the power of the horn that started small ([v. 9](#)), Antiochus IV. This entailed the cessation of regular temple observances.

**Prospered.** The vision depicts the apparent success of the wicked acts of Antiochus IV (the horn that started small). That success included the destruction of copies of the Hebrew Scripture (cf. [1 Maccabees 1:56–57](#)).

**8:14 Until two thousand and three hundred days.** The phrase "evenings and mornings" occurs in the Old Testament only here and in [verse 26](#). Some understand it as a reference to the evening and morning sacrifices (cf. [Ex 29:38–42](#)). On that basis it would represent 1,150 days. Others view it as simply an expression for 2,300 days. Since the beginning of the persecutions of Antiochus IV could be linked with any one of a number of incidents beginning early as 171 B.C., it is difficult to determine which understanding of the phrase is to be preferred. The number 23 may be symbolic of a fixed period, as in apocalyptic literature outside the Bible.

**Then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.** The temple was cleansed and rededicated under the leadership of Judas Maccabeus on December 25, 165 B.C. (see [note on 11:34](#); cf. [Zec 9:13–17](#)).

**8:16 Gabriel.** This angel is mentioned four times in Scripture ([9:21; Lk 1:11, 19, 26](#)). The name denotes one who is strong in the Lord (Gabriel means "strength of God") because of a relationship with him.

**8:17 Son of man.** See [note on 7:13](#). The "strong man of God" (see [note on v. 16](#)), the angel Gabriel, was speaking to this exalted mortal.

**At the time of the end shall be the vision.** See also [verse 19](#) ("the appointed time of the end"). This expression does not necessarily have to do with the absolute end of history. It occurs in [11:27](#) and [35](#) in contexts that probably refer to the end of the persecutions under Antiochus IV.

**8:19 What shall be in the last end of the indignation.** The "timed wrath" may here refer to the time of God's judgment on his people Israel during the period of their subjection to the Babylonians, Persians and Greeks.

**8:20 The ram.** See [notes on verses 3–4](#).

two horns are the kings of Media and Persia. <sup>21</sup> And the rough goat is the king of Grecia: and the great horn that is between his eyes is the first king. <sup>22</sup> Now that being broken, whereas four stood up in its place, four kingdoms shall stand up out of the nation, but not in his power. <sup>23</sup> And in the latter time of their kingdom, when the transgressors are come to the full, a king of fierce countenance, and understanding dark sentences, shall stand up. <sup>24</sup> And his power shall be mighty, but not by his own power: and he shall destroy wonderfully, and shall prosper, and practice, and shall destroy the mighty and the holy people. <sup>25</sup> And through his policy also he shall cause craft to prosper in his hand; and he shall magnify himself in his heart, and by peace shall destroy many: he shall also stand up against the Prince of princes; but he shall be broken without hand. <sup>26</sup> And the vision of the evening and the morning which was told is true: wherefore shut thou up the vision; for it shall be for many days. <sup>27</sup> And I Daniel fainted, and was sick certain days; afterward I rose, and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of the seed of the Medes, who was made king over the realm of the Chaldeans; <sup>2</sup> In the first year of his reign, I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, concerning which the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup> And I set my face to the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: <sup>4</sup> And I prayed to the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them that keep his commandments; <sup>5</sup> We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from thy precepts and from thy judgments: <sup>6</sup> Neither have we hearkened to thy servants the prophets, who spoke in thy name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. <sup>7</sup> O Lord, righteousness belongeth to thee, but to us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against thee. <sup>8</sup> O Lord, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against thee. <sup>9</sup> To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him; <sup>10</sup> Neither have we obeyed the voice of the LORD our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets. <sup>11</sup> And all Israel have transgressed thy law, even by departing, that they might not obey thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the

**8:21 Rough goat ... horn.** See notes on verses 5 and 8.

**8:22 Four.** See note on verse 8.

**8:23–25** See notes on verses 9–14. Some interpreters have found a picture of the antichrist in the descriptions of the horn of this chapter (v. 8) by viewing Antiochus IV as a type of any powerful opponent of God's people in the future.

**8:25 Many.** The faithful Jews, as well as "the mighty" or "the strong ones" of the verse 24.

**Prince of princes.** A reference to God.

**He shall be broken without hand.** Antiochus IV was not assassinated, nor did he die in battle. His death in 164 B.C. resulted from a physical or nervous disorder. For variant accounts of his death see 1 Maccabees 6:1-16 and 2 Maccabees 9:1-28.

**8:26 Shut thou up the vision.** A "seal" was used either to authenticate or certify something or to close up or secure something for confidentiality or safekeeping. The second sense seems most fitting in this context (see note on 6:17).

**For it shall be for many days.** Literally, "[the vision] pertains to many days." The conquests of Alexander (333-323 B.C.) occurred nearly two centuries after Daniel's vision (c. 550 B.C.), while Antiochus IV was active about a century and a half after Alexander (171-164 B.C.).

**9:1–27 Vision of the Seventy Weeks.** Daniel recorded an account of a revelation he received concerning Jeremiah's prophecy about the 70 years of Jerusalem's desolation. The vision followed Daniel's prayer in which he confessed the justice of Jerusalem's desolation and sought the favor of God for the restoration of the city and the temple. This vision revealed that the time of Judah's exile was extended because the people of God had not yet repented of the sins that had brought exile upon them.

**9:1 In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus.** See notes on 5:30–31 and 6:1. The term "Xerxes" (not the same person mentioned in Est 1:1) may be a royal title rather than a personal name. The first year of Darius's reign was 539 B.C.

**9:2 Understood by books ... came to Jeremiah the prophet ... accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.** See Jer 25:11–12 and 29:10. Daniel was concerned because the 70 years of exile had nearly come to an end but the Israelites were not ready to return to the land. Interpreters differ on the dates of the beginning and ending of the 70-year period and on whether it is to be understood as a round number, suggesting a human lifetime, or an exact time period. Some date the period from 586 B.C. (the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar) to 515 B.C., when the restoration of the temple was completed under Zerubbabel (Ezr 6:13–18; Zec 4:9). Others date the beginning of the period to the year of Daniel's own captivity (604 B.C.; see note on 1:1). Daniel was also undoubtedly aware that Isaiah had prophesied Israel's release from exile under the Persian ruler Cyrus (Isa 44:28; 45:1–13). As Daniel apparently did here, the writer of Chronicles cited Cyrus's release of the exiles as having taken place in 539 B.C. as the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecy (2Ch 36:21). In the literature of the ancient Near East 70 years was a standard time period during which a god would punish his people for disloyalty. This period could be lengthened or shortened by the reactions of the people. For this reason it is not surprising that there would be some flexibility in the ways different Biblical writers applied the number to Israel's history.

**9:4–19** Daniel's prayer is rooted in a covenantal understanding of the Lord's relation to his people (blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience; see especially vv. 5, 7, 11–12, 14; Lev 26:14–45; Dt 28:15–68; 30:1–5). For a similar prayer see Ne 9. The prayer contains four parts: (1) worship (v. 4); (2) a confession of sin (vv. 5–11a); (3) recognition of the justice of God in his judgment on sin (vv. 11b–14); and (4) a plea for God's mercy based on concern for his name, kingdom and will (vv. 15–19). The prayer is grounded in God's promises (v. 2), was voiced in a spirit of contrition and humility (v. 3) and provides a model for appropriate elements of effective prayer.



law of Moses the servant of God, because we have sinned against him.<sup>12</sup> And he hath confirmed his words, which he spoke against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven it hath not been done as it hath been done upon Jerusalem.<sup>13</sup> As it is written in the law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet we have not made our prayer before the LORD our God, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand thy truth.<sup>14</sup> Therefore hath the LORD watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for the LORD our God is righteous in all his works which he doeth: for we have not obeyed his voice.<sup>15</sup> And now, O Lord our God, that hast brought thy people out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand, and hast obtained thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly.<sup>16</sup> O Lord, according to all thy righteousness, I beseech thee, let thy anger and thy fury be turned away from thy city Jerusalem, thy holy mountain: because for our sins and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and thy people have become a reproach to all that are about us.<sup>17</sup> Now therefore, O our God, hear the prayer of thy servant, and his supplications, and cause thy face to shine upon thy sanctuary that is desolate, for the Lord's sake.<sup>18</sup> O my God, incline thy ear, and hear; open thy eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies.<sup>19</sup> O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thy own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.<sup>20</sup> And while I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin, and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the LORD my God for the holy mountain of my God;<sup>21</sup> Yes, while I was speaking in prayer, even **the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning**, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.<sup>22</sup> And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding.<sup>23</sup> At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision.<sup>24</sup> **Seventy weeks are determined** upon thy people and upon thy holy city to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy.<sup>25</sup> Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem to the **Messiah the Prince shall be** seven weeks, and sixty and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times.<sup>26</sup> And after sixty and two weeks **shall Messiah be cut off**, but not for himself: and **the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary**; and its end shall be with a flood, and to the end of the war desolations are determined.<sup>27</sup> And **he shall confirm the covenant with many for one week**: and in the midst of

**9:21 The man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning.** See [note on 8:16](#).

**9:24 Seventy weeks.** The "seventy 'sevens'" (lit., "seventy weeks") represent 490 years (see [note on 9:24–27](#)). The 70 years of exile (v. 2) are multiplied seven times in accordance with the pattern of covenantal curses ([Lev 26:14, 21, 24, 28](#)). God extended the exile because of Israel's continuing sinfulness. Just as the 70 years of exile predicted by Jeremiah may have followed a standard formula (see [note on v. 2](#)), the period of 490 years probably represented a standard formula as well. For instance, the intertestamental, non-canonical book Jubilees structures the whole of history into periods of 490 years. It is likely, therefore, that Daniel had in mind not a precise calculation of years but broadly defined segments of time. This extension of time was not absolute; it could be lengthened if the people continued to rebel or shortened if they repented.

**Are determined ... to.** Six things were to be accomplished during the period of "seventy 'sevens.'" As with all Old Testament prophecies about the restoration from exile in the latter days, these six items are fulfilled in the work of Christ in bringing the kingdom of God (see theological articles "The Kingdom of God" at [Mt 4](#) and "The Plan of the Ages" at [Heb 7](#)). The New Testament teaches that the kingdom was inaugurated in the first coming of Christ, continues now and will reach its consummation at Christ's return. Therefore, some aspects of these predictions are more closely related to Christ's first coming, others to his second coming and still others are fulfilled by both his first and second comings.

**9:25–27** The "seventy weeks" of years are divided into three subunits of 49 years (seven "sevens"; v. 25), 434 years (sixty-two "sevens"; v. 26) and seven years (one "seven"; v. 27). Interpreters differ over whether these subunits are to be viewed as a continuous sequence or as subunits separated by time intervals. Many attempts have been made to understand this chronology as precise numbers of years,

but all attempts fall short of completeness due to the fact that these numbers were intended as round figures of representative periods of time. Although Daniel's calculations are not to be taken as precise, the basic pattern of his prediction may be discerned without falling into speculation. The order to rebuild Jerusalem (v. 25) was followed by seven "sevens" or 49 years (v. 25), at which time the rebuilding of Jerusalem was completed (see Ezra and Nehemiah). This was followed by sixty-two "sevens" or 434 years (v. 25), at which time the Messiah was cut off (v. 26; see [note](#)). The single "seven" was fulfilled during or near the time of Christ's earthly ministry (v. 27).

**9:25 Messiah the Prince.** Two interpretations of this figure are possible: (1) He is the Messiah, the Christ. (2) He is a king whom God has anointed as his instrument in accomplishing his will (cf. [Isa 45:1](#)). While most interpreters take the anointed one and the ruler in verse 25 to be the same person, there is some disagreement as to whether or not this figure is identical to the person or persons referred to as "anointed one" and "ruler" in verse 26. In verse 26 the ruler appears to act against God. If the same ruler is intended in both verses, he is most likely not to be equated with the Messiah.

**9:26 Shall Messiah be cut off.** This is either a reference to the crucifixion of Christ or to judgment that God would bring against a king who had overstepped his bounds as God's instrument of judgment (see [note on v. 25](#)).

**The people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.** A reference either to the Greek Antiochus IV Epiphanes as a precursor to the Roman general Titus (see "Introduction: Purpose and Distinctives") or directly to Titus and/or his armies, who destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

**9:27 He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week.** The most likely antecedent of "he" is "the Anointed One" or the ruler" (v. 26). It is popular to interpret this statement as descriptive of an agree-

the week he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations, he shall make *it* desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate.

**In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia**, a thing was revealed to Daniel, whose name was called Belteshazzar; and the thing *was* true, but the time appointed *was* long: and he understood the thing, and had understanding of the vision.<sup>2</sup> In those days I Daniel **was mourning** three full weeks.<sup>3</sup> I ate no pleasant bread, neither came flesh nor wine in my mouth, neither did I anoint myself at all, till three whole weeks were fulfilled.<sup>4</sup> And in the four and twentieth day of the first month, as I was by the side of the great river, which *is* Hiddekel;<sup>5</sup> Then I lifted up my eyes, and looked, and behold a certain **man clothed in linen**, whose loins *were* girded with fine gold of Uphaz:<sup>6</sup> His body also *was* like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in color to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude.<sup>7</sup> And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision: but a **great quaking** fell upon them, so that they fled to hide themselves.<sup>8</sup> Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.<sup>9</sup> Yet I heard the voice of his words: and when I heard the voice of his words, then I was in a deep sleep on my face, and my face toward the ground.<sup>10</sup> And behold, a hand touched me, which set me upon my knees and *upon* the palms of my hands.<sup>11</sup> And he said to me, O Daniel, a man greatly beloved, understand the words that I speak to thee, and stand upright: for to thee I am now sent. And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood trembling.<sup>12</sup> Then said he to me, Fear not, Daniel: for from the first day that thou didst set thy heart to understand, and to chasten thyself before thy God, **thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words**.<sup>13</sup> **But the prince of the kingdom of Persia** withstood me one and twenty days: but lo, **Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me**; and I remained there with the kings of Persia.<sup>14</sup> Now I have come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision *is* for many days.<sup>15</sup> And when he had spoken such words to me, I set my face towards the ground, and I became dumb.<sup>16</sup> And behold, *one* like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spoke, and said to him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength.<sup>17</sup> For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, immediately there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me.<sup>18</sup> Then there came again and touched me *one* like the appearance of a man, and he strengthened me,<sup>19</sup> And said, O man greatly beloved, fear not: peace *be* to thee, be strong, yes, be strong. And when he had spoken to me, I was strengthened, and said, Let my lord speak; for thou hast strengthened me.<sup>20</sup> Then said he, Knowest thou for what cause I come to thee? and now **will I return to fight with the prince of Persia**: and when I am gone forth,

10

ment that the antichrist will establish with Jewish people who have re-gathered in the land of Israel during the "tribulation" period, but this outlook is less likely. In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. This may be a reference to the termination of the Old Testament sacrificial system by the atoning death of Christ. It is also possible that it refers to the desecration of the temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes or Titus (see note on v. 26). Some interpreters take the less likely view that this is a reference to the antichrist's prohibition of "sacrifice and offering" (perhaps standing for religious practice in general) by the re-gathered Jewish people after three and a half years (Rev 11:2; 12:6, 14) of the "tribulation" period. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation. Daniel most likely described the destruction of the temple under either Antiochus IV Epiphanes or Titus (see note on v. 26 and "Introduction: Purpose and Distinctives"), rather than actions of a future antichrist. Phrases similar to "an abomination that causes desolation" occur in 8:13, 11:31 and 12:11 (see their notes), as well as in 1 Maccabees 1:54. Daniel 8:13 and 1 Maccabees 1:54 refer to the activities of Antiochus IV. Daniel used the same language to describe one who would defile the temple in the time near that of the Messiah. Jesus alluded to this abomination in Matt 24:15 and Mk 13:14.

**10:1–11:1** *The Angel's Message to Daniel*. Daniel was prepared by an angelic being to receive a revelation pertaining to "a time yet to come" (10:14).

**10:1–12:13** *Vision of the Future of God's People*. The prophet turned his attention to a final, lengthy vision that focused on the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (see "Introduction: Purpose and Distinctives") and looked beyond that reign as well. This material divides into four main sections: the angel's announcement to Daniel (10:1–11:1), events from

Daniel until Antiochus IV Epiphanes (11:2–20), the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes (11:21–12:3) and a final message to Daniel (12:4–13).

**10:1** **In the third year of Cyrus king of Persia**. In 537 B.C. See notes on 1:21, 5:30, 6:1 and 9:1. The repatriated exiles were at this time back in the land to rebuild the temple (Ezr 1:1–4; 3:8), but they would soon have to give up the rebuilding (Ezr 4:24).

**10:2** **Was mourning**. Daniel probably mourned because of the state of Jerusalem (Ne 1:4; Isa 61:3–4; 64:8–12; 66:10).

**10:5** **Man clothed in linen**. Verses 5–6 give a detailed description of an angel, perhaps Gabriel (9:21) or the one who spoke to Gabriel (8:16). His appearance was similar to that of the glory of the Lord (Eze 1:26–28; Rev 1:12–16). For other references to angels see Jdg 13:6, Eze 9:2–3; 10:2 and Lk 24:4.

**10:7** **Great quaking**. See Isa 6:5 and Lk 5:8.

**10:12** **Thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words**. The vision and revelation that Daniel received came as a direct response to his prayers.

**10:13** **But the prince of the kingdom of Persia**. In the context it is apparent that this prince refers to an evil, but powerful, spiritual being (cf. Job 1:6–12; Ps 82; Isa 24:21; Lk 11:14–26) assigned by Satan to activity pertaining to Persian rule. Similarly, the archangel Michael is called "the great prince who protects" Israel (12:1). The host of heaven are said to fight for Israel elsewhere in the Old Testament (Jdg 5:20; 2Ki 6:15–18; Ps 103:20–21).

**Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me**. Michael is depicted as the commander of the holy angels in Jude 9 and Rev 12:7. Here a glimpse is given into the spiritual battles waged in the heavenly realms that affect events on Earth (cf. Eph 6:12; Rev 12:7–9).

**10:20** **Will I return to fight with the prince of Persia**. See note on

lo, the prince of Grecia shall come. <sup>21</sup> But I will show thee that which is noted in the scripture of truth: and there is none that holdeth with me in these things, but Michael your prince.

# 11

Also I, in the first year of Darius the Mede, even I, stood to confirm and to strengthen him. <sup>2</sup> And now will I show thee the truth. Behold, there shall stand up yet three kings in Persia; and the fourth shall be far richer than they all: and by his strength through his riches he shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia. <sup>3</sup> And a mighty king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will. <sup>4</sup> And when he shall stand up, his kingdom shall be broken, and shall be divided towards the four winds of heaven; and not to his posterity, nor according to his dominion which he ruled: for his kingdom shall be plucked up, even for others beside those. <sup>5</sup> And the king of the south shall be strong, and one of his princes; and he shall be strong above him, and have dominion; his dominion shall be a great dominion. <sup>6</sup> And in the end of years they shall join themselves together; for the king's daughter of the south shall come to the king of the north to make an agreement: but she shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm: but she shall be given up, and they that brought her, and he that begat her, and he that strengthened her in these times. <sup>7</sup> But out of a branch of her roots shall one stand up in his estate, who shall come with an army, and shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north, and shall deal against them, and shall prevail: <sup>8</sup> And shall also carry captives into Egypt their gods, with their princes, and with their precious vessels of silver and of gold; and he shall continue more years than the king of the north. <sup>9</sup> So the king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land. <sup>10</sup> But his sons shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces: and one shall certainly come, and overflow, and pass through: then shall he return, and be stirred up, even to his fortress. <sup>11</sup> And the king of the south shall be moved with wrath, and shall come forth and fight with him, even with the king of the north: and he shall set forth a great multitude; but the multitude shall be given into his hand. <sup>12</sup> And when he hath taken away the multitude, his heart shall be lifted up; and he shall cast down many ten thousands: but he shall not be strengthened by it. <sup>13</sup> For the king of the north shall return, and shall set forth a multitude greater than the former, and shall certainly come after certain years

verse 13.

**The prince of Grecia.** This is a fallen angel or demonic power assigned by Satan to participate in the affairs of the Greek kingdom (see [note on v. 13](#); see [Jn 14:30](#); [Eph 6:12](#)). Although both Persia and Greece would conquer God's people, Daniel was to understand that their power would be limited by the power of God, whose purposes always prevail.

**10:21 The scripture of truth.** A metaphor for God's knowledge and control over all of history.

**None ... but Michael.** Michael's interest in protecting Israel (see [note on v. 13](#); cf. [12:1](#)) corresponded with that of the messenger, who was directly concerned about God's purposes.

**11:1 In the first year of Darius the Mede.** Earlier the angel who was speaking to Daniel had given assistance to Michael (see [note on 10:13](#)), perhaps in connection with the Persian decree to permit the Jews to return to their homeland.

**11:2-20 From Daniel Until Antiochus IV Epiphanes.** The revelation given to Daniel in 11:2-20 concerned ancient Near Eastern history from the time of Daniel until the time of Antiochus IV Epiphanes. The prophet's vision was unusually detailed, describing intricate interconnections among events far beyond that normally given to an Israelite prophet. Such details drew the attention of early readers of this book and demonstrated Daniel's reliability.

**11:2 Three kings in Persia.** Cambyses (529-523 B.C.), Pseudo-Smerdis or Gaumata (523-2 B.C.) and Darius I (522-486 B.C.).

**The fourth.** Xerxes I (485-464 B.C.).

**His riches.** See [Est 1:4](#).

**He shall stir up all against the realm of Grecia.** Xerxes waged a number of campaigns against Greece, beginning in 480 B.C.

**11:3 A mighty king shall stand up.** Alexander the Great (336-323 B.C.). See [notes on 7:6](#) and [8:5](#) and [8](#).

**11:4 His kingdom shall be broken ... toward the four winds of heaven.** See [notes on 7:6](#) and [8:8](#).

**11:5 The king of the south.** Ptolemy I Soter (323-285 B.C.).

**One of his princes; and he shall be strong above him.** Seleucus I Nicator (311-280 B.C.). Seleucus broke with Ptolemy, became king of Babylon and controlled territories from the Indus River in the east, to Syria in the west.

**11:6-20** Verses 6-20 contain detailed predictions of relations between the king of the North (the Seleucid kingdom) and the king of the South (the Ptolemaic kingdom). This section may be divided into three parts: (1) events concerning Laodice and Berenice ([vv. 6-9](#)), (2) the career of Antiochus III ([vv. 10-19](#)) and (3) the reign of Seleucus IV ([v. 20](#)).

**11:6 The king's daughter of the south.** Berenice, the daughter of Ptolemy II Philadelphus (285-246 B.C.).

**To make an agreement.** Refers to a marriage alliance (c. 250 B.C.) between Antiochus II Theos (261-246 B.C.) of Syria and Ptolemy II of Egypt.

**She shall not retain the power of the arm; neither shall he stand, nor his arm.** Laodice, the former wife of Antiochus, instigated a conspiracy that resulted in the poisoning deaths of Berenice, Antiochus II and their infant son.

**11:7 Out of a branch of her roots.** Ptolemy III Euergetes (246-221 B.C.), the brother of Berenice (see [note on v. 6](#)).

**Shall enter into the fortress of the king of the north.** Ptolemy III attacked the Seleucid kingdom, had Laodice (see [note on v. 6](#)) put to death and returned to Egypt with considerable booty.

**11:9 The king of the south shall come into his kingdom, and shall return into his own land.** This refers to the unsuccessful campaign of Seleucus II Callinicus (246-226 B.C.), the son of Laodice, against the Ptolemaic kingdom in 240 B.C.

**11:10 His sons.** Seleucus III Ceraunus (226-223 B.C.) and Antiochus III the Great (223-187 B.C.).

**Shall be stirred up, and shall assemble a multitude of great forces.** Antiochus III fought with the Ptolemies from 222-187 B.C. and for a time gained control of Canaan, as well as western Syria.

**His fortress.** This probably refers to Raphia, a Ptolemaic fortress in southern Canaan. A major battle was fought there in 217 B.C.

**11:11 The king of the south.** Ptolemy IV Philopator (221-203 B.C.). **Fight with him, even with the king of the north.** Antiochus III. He suffered great losses (over 14,000 men) at the battle of Raphia in 217 B.C.

**11:13 Shall set forth a multitude greater than the former.** In alliance with Philip V of Macedon, he raised an even larger army to invade the



with a great army and with much riches. <sup>14</sup> And in those times there shall many stand up against the king of the south: also the robbers of thy people shall exalt themselves to establish the vision; but they shall fall. <sup>15</sup> So **the king of the north shall come, and cast up a mount, and take the most fortified cities:** and the arms of the south shall not withstand, neither his chosen people, neither *shall there be any* strength to withstand. <sup>16</sup> But he that cometh against him shall do according to his own will, and none shall stand before him: and he shall stand in **the glorious land**, which by his hand shall be consumed. <sup>17</sup> He shall also set his face to enter with the strength of his whole kingdom, and **upright ones with him; thus shall he do: and he shall give him the daughter** of women, corrupting her: but **she shall not stand on his side**, neither be for him. <sup>18</sup> After this shall he turn his face to the isles, and shall take many: but **a prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease;** without his own reproach he shall cause *it* to turn upon him. <sup>19</sup> Then he shall turn his face towards the fort of his own land: but he shall stumble and fall, and not be found. <sup>20</sup> **Then shall stand up in his estate a raiser of taxes** in the glory of the kingdom: but within few days he shall be destroyed, neither in anger, nor in battle. <sup>21</sup> And in his estate shall stand up **a vile person, to whom they shall not give the honor of the kingdom:** but he shall come in peaceably, and obtain the kingdom by flatteries. <sup>22</sup> And with the arms of a flood shall they be overflowed from before him, and **shall be broken; yes, also the prince of the covenant.** <sup>23</sup> And after the league *made* with him he shall work deceitfully: for he shall come up, and shall become strong with a small people. <sup>24</sup> He shall enter peaceably even upon the fattest places of the province; and he shall do *that* which his fathers have not done, nor his fathers' fathers; he shall scatter among them the prey, and spoil, and riches: *yes*, and he shall forecast his devices against the strong holds, even for a time. <sup>25</sup> And he shall stir up his power and his courage against **the king of the south** with a great army; and the king of the south shall be stirred up to battle with a very great and mighty army; but **he shall not stand:** for they shall forecast devices against him. <sup>26</sup> Yes, they that feed of the portion of his provisions shall destroy him, and his army shall overflow: and many shall fall down slain. <sup>27</sup> And both these kings hearts *shall be* to do mischief, and they shall speak lies at one table; but it shall not prosper: for yet the end *shall be* at the time appointed. <sup>28</sup> Then **shall he return into his land with great riches;** and his heart *shall be* against the holy covenant; and he shall do *exploits*, and return to his own land. <sup>29</sup> At the time appointed **he shall return, and come towards the south;** but it shall not be as the former, or as the latter. <sup>30</sup> For **the ships of Chittim shall come against him:** therefore he shall be grieved, and return, and have **indignation against the holy covenant:** so shall he do; he shall even return, and have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant. <sup>31</sup> And arms shall stand on his part, and they shall pollute the sanctuary of strength, and shall **take away the daily sacrifice,** and they shall place the abomination that maketh desolate. <sup>32</sup> And such as do wickedly against the covenant shall he corrupt by flatteries: but **the**

Ptolemaic kingdom. Ptolemy IV died in mysterious circumstances and was succeeded by Ptolemy V Epiphanes (203-181 B.C.), his four-year-old son.

**11:15 The king of the north shall come, and cast up a mount, and take the most fortified cities.** This refers to the victory of Antiochus III at Sidon over the Egyptian general Scopas in 198 B.C. It marked the end of Ptolemaic rule in the area only much later referred to as Palestine.

**11:16 The glorious land.** The promised land (see vv. 41, 45; 8:9).

**11:17 Upright ones with him; thus shall he do: and he shall give him the daughter.** Cleopatra, the daughter of Antiochus III, was given in marriage to the boy king Ptolemy V.

**She shall not stand on his side.** Cleopatra aligned herself with the Egyptians rather than with her father. She sought Roman help against the attempt of Antiochus III to take coastal cities in Asia Minor controlled by the Egyptians.

**11:18 A prince for his own behalf shall cause the reproach offered by him to cease.** The Roman general Lucius Cornelius Scipio defeated Antiochus III in several battles and forced him to cede Asia Minor to Roman control (the Peace of Apamea; 188 B.C.). At this time the second son of Antiochus III, later to be known as Antiochus IV Epiphanes, was taken hostage to Rome.

**11:20 Then shall stand up in his estate.** Seleucus IV Philopator (187-175 B.C.), the elder son of Antiochus III.

**A raiser of taxes.** Heliodorus (see 2 Maccabees 3:7-40).

**11:21-12:3 The Rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanes.** Daniel turned to the most important character in the history outlined thus far: the great Antiochus IV, who persecuted the Jews and defiled the temple. The prophet concentrated on his accession and character (11:21-24), his career (11:25-31), the conditions of God's people during his reign (11:32-35), a summary of his religious attitudes (11:36-39), his heart's

ambition (11:40-45) and a description of his defeat (12:1-3).

**11:21 A vile person, to whom they shall not give the honor of the kingdom.** This is the infamous Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.), brother of Seleucus IV but not his legitimate successor, since Seleucus IV had a son, Demetrius Soter, also known as Demetrius I. See verses 23-24 and notes on 8:9-14.

**11:22 Shall be broken; yes, also the prince of the covenant.** Perhaps this is a reference to the assassination of the high priest Onias III by the supporters of Antiochus IV (175-163 B.C.) in Jerusalem in 171 B.C. (cf. 2 Maccabees 4:32-43 [an Apocryphal book]).

**11:25 The king of the south.** Ptolemy VI Philometor (181-146 B.C.), son of Ptolemy V and Cleopatra and nephew of Antiochus (see note on v. 17).

**He shall not stand.** Antiochus IV defeated Ptolemy VI at Pelusium, located on the border of Egypt (cf. 1 Maccabees 1:16-19).

**11:28 Shall he return into his land with great riches; and his heart shall be against the holy covenant.** As a result of intrigues in Jerusalem against his supporters, Antiochus IV plundered the temple on his return from Egypt to Antioch in Syria (cf. 1 Maccabees 1:20-28).

**11:29 He shall return, and come towards the south.** Antiochus IV invaded Egypt again in 168 B.C.

**11:30 The ships of Chittim shall come against him.** Roman armies under Gaius Popilius Laenas forced Antiochus IV to retreat from Egypt. **Indignation against the holy covenant.** Antiochus determined to exterminate Jewish religion.

**11:31 Take away the daily sacrifice ... abomination that maketh desolate.** The desecration of the temple in December 168 B.C. by Antiochus IV (cf. 1 Maccabees 1:54,59; 2 Maccabees 6:2 [Apocryphal books]; see notes on 8:11; 9:27; 12:11).

**11:32 The people that know their God shall be strong.** Refers to

people that know their God shall be strong, and do *exploits*.<sup>33</sup> And they that understand among the people shall instruct many: yet they shall fall by the sword, and by flame, by captivity, and by spoil, *many* days.<sup>34</sup> Now when they shall fall, **they shall be assisted with a little help**: but many shall cleave to them with flatteries.<sup>35</sup> And *some* of them of understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make *them* white, *even* to **the time of the end**: because *it is* yet for a time appointed.<sup>36</sup> And the king shall do according to his will; and he shall exalt himself, and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak marvelous things against the God of gods, and shall prosper **till the indignation be accomplished**: for that which is determined shall be done.<sup>37</sup> Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers, nor the desire of women, nor regard any god: for he shall magnify himself above all.<sup>38</sup> But in his estate shall he honor the God of forces: and a god whom his fathers knew not shall he honor with gold, and silver, and with precious stones, and pleasant things.<sup>39</sup> Thus shall he do in the most strong holds with a strange god, whom he shall acknowledge *and* increase with glory: and he shall cause them to rule over many, and shall divide the land for gain.<sup>40</sup> And **at the time of the end** shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over.<sup>41</sup> He shall enter also into the **glorious land**, and many *countries* shall be overthrown: but these shall escape out of his hand, *even* Edom, and Moab, and the chief of the children of Ammon.<sup>42</sup> He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape.<sup>43</sup> But he shall have power over the treasures of gold and of silver, and over all the precious things of Egypt: and the Libyans and the Cushites *shall be* at his steps.<sup>44</sup> But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many.<sup>45</sup> And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain: yet **he shall come to his end, and none shall help him**.

**12** And **at that time** shall Michael stand up, the great prince who standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be **a time of trouble**, such as never was since there was a nation *even* to that same time: and at that time **thy people shall be delivered**, every one that shall be found written in the book.<sup>2</sup> And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth **shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt**.<sup>3</sup> And they that are wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.<sup>4</sup> But thou, O Daniel, **shut up the words**, and seal the book, *even* to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased.<sup>5</sup> Then I Daniel looked, and behold, there stood other two, the one on this side of the bank of the river, and the other on that side of the bank of the river.<sup>6</sup> And *one* said to the man clothed in linen, who *was* upon the waters of the river, How long *shall it be* to the end of these wonders?<sup>7</sup> And I heard the man clothed in linen, who *was* upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for

those who opposed Antiochus IV and remained faithful to the Lord even unto death (1 Maccabees 1:61-63 [an Apocryphal book]).

**11:34 They shall be assisted with a little help.** Possibly this is a reference to Mattathias, an elderly priest, and his five sons (John, Simon, Judas, Eleazar and Jonathan), who waged a guerrilla war against Antiochus IV. Mattathias died in 166 B.C. His sons carried on the struggle and became known as the Maccabees. Victory was achieved under Judas Maccabeus in December 165 B.C., when the temple was cleansed and the daily sacrifices restored (cf. 1 Maccabees 4:36-39).

**11:35 The time of the end ... a time appointed.** See note on 8:17.

**11:36-39 This king "will do as he pleases ... [and] magnify himself above every god".** (v. 36). He will "show no regard for the gods of his fathers" (v. 37) but will "greatly honor those who acknowledge him" (v. 39).

**11:36-12:3** At his proudest moment this king will be destroyed right at Mount Zion in the heart of the Holy Land (vv. 44-45). His defeat in 12:1-3 is described in terms of the absolute end of history. Because these prophesies have not found a historical fulfillment, it is difficult to discern how literal or metaphorical they are, and our interpretation must be guarded. Certain details in 11:36-12:3 cannot be easily harmonized with the time of Antiochus IV. For this reason many evangelical interpreters understand these verses to be descriptive of the antichrist who will persecute God's people just prior to the second advent of Christ (cf. 12:1-3). Yet this understanding requires the assumption of an extended time interval between the events depicted in 11:21-35 and those in 11:36-12:3, which the text does not communicate. It is possible that these prophesied events were averted, altered or delayed

(see "Introduction to the Prophetic Books").

**11:36 Till the indignation be accomplished.** Just as in 8:17 and 11:35, the time of persecution is subject to God's control.

**11:40 At the time of the end.** See note on 8:17.

**11:41 Glorious land.** Canaan (see vv. 16, 45; 8:9).

**11:45 He shall come to his end, and none shall help him.** See Joel 3 (see also Zec 14:1-4; 2Th 2:8; Rev 16:13-16; 19:11-21).

**12:1 At that time.** Michael, the angelic protector of Israel, will not permit God's people to be persecuted forever. He will judge those who oppress his people. Michael, the great prince who protects your people. See note on 10:13.

**A time of trouble.** See Matt 24:21 and Mk 13:19, where Jesus drew upon these prophecies about Antiochus IV to describe the time of the Roman siege against Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

**Thy people shall be delivered.** This deliverance is not necessarily from martyrdom (v. 2) but from the power of Satan (cf. Mt 6:13; 2Ti 4:18). As such the verse assures God's people that he will deliver them from Satan's temptation to apostatize during the time of distress.

**12:2 Shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.** This is a prediction of the bodily resurrection of the godly and ungodly prior to a final judgment (Mt 25:46; Jn 5:28-29).

**12:4-13 A Final Message to Daniel.** The book concludes by setting out a future course of events and by promising Daniel rest in the eternal state.

**12:4 Shut up the words.** The act of sealing was understood as giving something a mark of authentication (see note on 8:26).

ever, that *it shall be* for **a time, times, and a half**; and when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people, all these *things* shall be finished.<sup>8</sup> And I heard, but **I understood not**: then said I, O my Lord, what *shall be* the end of these *things*?<sup>9</sup> And he said, Go thy way Daniel: for the words *are* closed up and sealed till the time of the end.<sup>10</sup> Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.<sup>11</sup> And from the time *that* the daily *sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be* a thousand two hundred and ninety days.<sup>12</sup> Blessed *is* he that waiteth, and cometh to the **thousand three hundred and five and thirty days**.<sup>13</sup> But go thou thy way till the end: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.

**12:7 A time, times, and a half.** See [note on 7:25](#).

**12:8 I understood not.** Daniel did not comprehend the angel's response ([v. 7](#)) to his initial inquiry ([v. 6](#)), so he rephrased the question.

**12:11 The daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up.** See [note on 9:27](#). The simile

activity of Antiochus IV prefigured this activity of the Roman Titus in A.D. 70.

**12:12 1,290 days ... 1,335 days.** The angel clarified his previous answer ([v. 7](#); see [note on v. 8](#)). The significance of these time frames is obscure.